

Lecture
2021–22



Creating Global Citizens: Museums and their role in building a future.

Dame Diane Lees DBE
Director-General, Imperial War Museums

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Chairman's Foreword



The evening of 2nd November 2021 has proven memorable for the Portal Trust. It was the Trust's inaugural annual education lecture under its own new name and logo. The lecture took place in a long-familiar lecture theatre in Bunhill Row, but what had been the Cass Business School is now, as this photograph shows, the Bayes Business School. Professor Paolo Volpin gave his customarily warm Dean's welcome to the School. The vote of thanks to our lecturer was given by the recently-appointed President of City, University of London, Professor Sir Anthony Finkelstein CBE FREng, to whom we were pleased to relate the Trust's long-standing creative relationship with his university.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, there had been no annual lecture in autumn 2020. We were honoured that our lecturer, Dame Diane Lees, was willing to postpone by a year. By good fortune, Covid restrictions allowed us to meet in person shortly before the surging Omicron variant swept the country. Thus, the lecture could be delivered in the auditorium. But for the first time, the audience, which included many of the Trust's long-standing partners and collaborators and former trustees, was joined by an invisible audience connected remotely by Zoom.

Our distinguished lecturer: Dame Diane Lees DBE

At the time of her lecture, Diane was CBE, but the gap between delivery and publication allows us to congratulate her for being appointed DBE in the 2022 New Year Honours for her services to

museums and the cultural heritage. Diane was appointed Director-General of the Imperial War Museums (the group extends across the nation) in 2008, she chaired the National Museum Directors' Council in 2013–17.

Diane's personal commitment to education is expressed in many more ways than leadership, scholarship and research in her museums sector. Amongst various related responsibilities, she is a Pro-Chancellor on the University of Lincoln and chairs its Board of Governors.

A lively Q&A session followed the lecture

Our Deputy Chairman, Sophie Fernandes,* had tablet in hand to allow her to take a mix of questions from the remote participants and those present. Diane answered with passion and candour.

In sum, we enjoyed an evening of intellectual stimulus and rare sociability with participants both in person and online. Diane's lecture established what I expect will become the new format for delivery: to audience and to camera. If you participated in November by whatever method, you can now re-live Diane's memorable lecture. If you are a newcomer, please do join us for another stimulating educational exploration next year.

John Hall
Chairman
The Portal Trust



*Sophie was elected Chairman of the Trust in February 2022 on John's retirement from the role.

Chief Executive's Foreword



The last two years were a challenge for the third sector in London, and indeed across the UK. We were an early signatory of the London Funders' Covid-19 pledge and tried our best to remain flexible and listen while grantees faced what were very uncertain times. As a result, we provided small emergency grants to some of the most impacted projects we support and purchased laptops for every pupil at Stepney All Saints Secondary School, of which the Portal Trust is the Trustee, enabling them all to study remotely.

Like the rest of the world, we now hope the worst of the pandemic is behind us and we look forward to continuing to do what we do best; supporting organisations with great ideas and giving individual young people the funding they need to fulfil their potential.

The Portal Trust is a progressive and independent grant-maker which prides itself on collaboration and funding innovative approaches that focus on supporting the most disadvantaged young people in society. We are apolitical and work across all sectors of education and are not afraid to take a risk in funding new or untried concepts or ideas; indeed we very much see this as part of the unique role of the third sector.

Over the last ten years, we've provided over £50 million in direct funding and in-kind support for individuals and projects at every level of education, from nursery to postgraduate. We recently awarded London College of Fashion, UAL, £4 million towards its social responsibility activities and construction of a new campus located at East Bank, Stratford, but we are also proud of the community organisations we provide with more modest grants.

We're always looking to forge new links and support new initiatives. So, if you have an educational project in inner London, or you're a young person in need of financial support to seize a big opportunity, why not take a look at some of our research, case studies and our eligibility criteria on our website at www.portaltrust.org, or follow us on Twitter @Portal_Trust

For readers of this lecture in its printed version, who can get to London's South Bank, there is no better follow-up to the lecture than visiting the Imperial War Museum London on Lambeth Road. From 1 April 2022, it will be open daily from 10 am to 6pm and you can book school visits and free timed tickets in advance or just turn up. If you can't make it in person you could stay at home and watch the Channel 5 documentary series that goes behind the scenes at the IWM's five branches across the country. The website www.iwm.org.uk tells you everything you need to know.

For the autumn of 2022, we look forward to welcoming Professor Rosie Meek, Head of the Centre of Criminology and Sociology at Royal Holloway, University of London, to deliver the second Portal Trust Education Lecture at the Bayes Business School on the evening of 9 November 2022. We do hope you will be able to join us.

Richard Foley
Chief Executive
The Portal Trust

**Creating Global Citizens:
Museums and their role
in building a future**

We would all probably be able to describe what we think a museum is, we visit them regularly. Before Covid-19 there were over 85 million visits a year, double the number of attendances at football matches in the UK. We would probably say they display things, and they create exhibitions and have events, but do we truly know what else they do?

There are an estimated 3,000 museums in the UK. Of these 1,735 are accredited, i.e. officially recognised by the Arts Council. You need to be an accredited museum to access some funding streams like the National Lottery. The 1,735 breaks down into 71 National Museums, established by Act of Parliament (43 in England, 3 in Northern Ireland, 8 in Scotland, 7 in Wales, 10 on the Isle of Man), 911 charitable trusts and community interest companies and 485 local authority funded. In addition, there are 152 National Trust museums, 42 English Heritage/Historic Environment Scotland museums and 74 University Museums. While they are all different in some ways, they all hold collections for public benefit (normally education).

The Museums Association definition is "Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They make accessible artefacts and specimens which they hold in trust for society". Currently there is a professional discussion about this definition led by the International Council of Museums. The desire is to create a statement which encapsulates a move to more social relevance and societal impact on the part of museums. The language of these debates has polarised views on whether museums are about collections or about communities, an argument which does little to help those coming into the sector or engaging with museums. It is an argument which seeks to badly define what a good museum should do. We are about working with our remit, our collections and our audiences to get the best long-term impact for the investment of considerable amounts of public and private money.

Behind these somewhat academic debates there has been a sea change in the way museums interpret the term 'learning'. From the outside it is easy to see how this is largely interpreted as being about 'schools'. The term 'learning' now covers everything from research, partnerships, public programmes, public engagement and community programmes to schools and a myriad of other descriptors. The activities range from single projects through to multi-year programmes and are mostly about using collections with the public to create good societal outcomes. These range from memory sessions for dementia patients through to revolutionary new swimsuits for Olympic swimmers, from understanding global conflict through to climate change. This work is about creating social awareness in new ways which are firmly rooted in collections and research. This all must be done in the context of reduced funding and continued attacks on the value of arts education in this country.

The Creative Industries Federation states that the UK creative industries were worth £115.9bn GVA and that the sector was growing by four times the rate of the UK economy in 2019. Yet investment in our museums has dropped significantly since 2010 with some museums in the Midlands, for example, losing 70% of their Local Authority funding. Our future workforce is also under threat. Current attitudes towards the perception of 'low value' degrees in the arts and humanities and the emphasis on STEM for T-levels are going to reduce the number of people seeking careers in the museum industry. Against all of this, rather than sitting back and bemoaning their condition, most museums have moved into new ways of working with their collections and audiences and creating new ways of funding them.

The Imperial War Museum's educational mission is to enable global citizens who understand conflicts from around the world today because they understand the history behind them.



The purpose of IWM is to enable the public to explore the causes, course and consequences of modern conflict. Our educational mission is to enable global citizens who understand conflicts from around the world today because they understand the history behind them. The world is by no means a peaceful place and museums can have a central role in making sense of what's happening today from the evidence of what's happened in the past. It is this evolution that is at the heart of the so-called 'culture wars'. But the central idea that history is subject to constant re-evaluation and reinterpretation as more evidence comes to light should not be seen as threatening – it adds to traditional narratives and knowledge rather than erasing them. It is simply a process of enlightenment about all narratives rather than a select few and we should celebrate our ability to absorb these multiple views. Trevor Phillips' three principles for introducing a rigorous and non-partisan approach to institutions' decision making about the reinterpretation of history are a welcome tool to move us beyond the unhelpful and destructive 'culture wars' narrative.

The Beamish Museum is a living, working museum that uses its collections to connect with people from all walks of life and tells the story of everyday life in the North East of England.



Given the fact that museums are often trusted by the general public, today's curators shoulder a huge responsibility to be much more publicly accountable. They are expected and should be, balanced and empathetic towards multiple audiences. It is not an easy task, for example big narratives like the Second World War are hard to deliver with nuance and sensitivity for multiple experiences. It is, however, universally established that the increased use of personal stories in our museums has allowed multiple voices to be heard without having to expand the weight of the big narrative. For example, we have a collection of uniform and documents from a Second World War pilot who was killed in a raid on Germany. We even have his front door key which makes a poignant reminder of the expectation of returning home safely. This has meant that a diversity of voices (class, gender, ethnicity, orientation etc) can be present without fuss or mediation. At IWM we try to ensure that the contributions of the whole Empire are represented, but unfortunately those stories were not systematically collected in the past and we are currently seeking more material to enhance a more rounded – and complete – narrative.

Increasingly, the many civic museums in the UK are thinking about their roles in the context of other community agendas. Traditional regional collections, mostly with Victorian origins, cover subjects such as art and design, ceramics, natural history, ethnography, archaeology etc and have, as you would expect, become centred on telling global stories to local audiences. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with that, these are amazing collections, in some cases of better quality than those in our national museums. It is their environment and audience that have changed. Museums are now showing objects to the communities whose ancestors originated them. The growth of the post Empire diaspora means that what you share with whom is very different from the principles embedded in Prince Albert's Great Exhibition. These grand projects were about demonstrating the innovation and power of the Empire. This change to being 'community first' has created new ways of engaging local audiences in places where domestic and international tourism is not strong. The new Museum of Making in Derby is a perfect example, demonstrating how Derby's central position in the Industrial Revolution can be made a source of pride and inspiration from its current population.

The Museum of Making in Derby demonstrates how Derby's central position in the Industrial Revolution can be made a source of pride and inspiration from its current population.



In addition, high quality research collaborations are at the heart of new ways of creating audiences that are more aware of the nuances of debates around current issues. For example, the IWM London season on refugees from war brought together the research from seven different universities. Covering everything from migration journeys through to demographics, the museum was uniquely placed to add the historic dimension to the current crisis. Evidence of war refugees from Belgium in the First World War; the Kinder Transport children from the Second World War and Syrian refugees from the recent conflict was added from material represented in the museum's collections. This put current debates around refugees into both a historic and a contemporary context. Current research projects include Mental Health and War, also funded by the research councils, which will result in the production of new exhibitions in coming years.

Other museums are working in a similar way on sustainable energy, climate change, agricultural technologies and much else. These collaborations result in creating opportunities to share, with audiences, ground-breaking research in a way that enables them to have a more rounded view of the issues and be able to translate them into meaningful ways to make a difference. When these projects work, they make us better global citizens, expanding the lens and showing how our own contribution to action or change can have true impact.

The Natural History Museum in London had a research collaboration with swimwear company Speedo. The scientists at the museum were conducting research into the evolution and design of the skin of sharks. This resulted in a new material which replicated the abilities of sharks to move through water at speed and was turned into bodysuits for swimmers. It was incredibly successful; the suits measurably increased the distance times of the swimmers – but unfortunately, they were subsequently banned in competition because they gave an unfair advantage to those in Speedo suits.

Social cohesion: this Tuk Tuk project at Luton Museums was designed to encourage the Asian diaspora to engage with the museum in telling their culture to other Luton residents.



Brokering relationships between communities is another way in which museums can contribute to more peaceful societies. IWM held a series of Conflict Cafes alongside our Syrian exhibition. This invited refugees, journalists and film makers to talk to the public about their views on the Syrian conflict, allowing difficult questions to be asked and answered within a safe space.

Other examples include Luton Museums who used the Tuk Tuks in the collection to broker conversations on Asian heritage with other Luton residents as part of a series of events to promote a cohesive community.

In Nottingham, the National Justice Museum works with young people at risk of offending to reduce crime rates and runs a Mock Trials programme which explains the justice system to those who encounter it.



In Nottingham, the National Justice Museum works with young people at risk of offending to reduce crime rates and runs a Mock Trials programme which explains the justice system to those who encounter it.

In Liverpool, National Museums Liverpool have created a project called House of Memories – an NHS commissioned programme to work with Liverpool residents with dementia. This multi-award-winning project has now been running for ten years and has a sustained set of impacts for its audience. This shows how museums are working for long term outcomes for its programmes rather than short term popular hits.

To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, First World War soldiers started appearing at public places around the UK and the numbers built over the day as did the First World War casualties at the Battle. None of the soldiers spoke, but instead handed out a small card with the name and regiment of a soldier who died on the first day of the battle. People were extremely moved by this human memorial.



The real change has come from the injection of multi-arts professionals in the sector. Museums are expanding what they do to encompass dance, drama and music in order to appeal to non-traditional museum audiences. For example, for the First World War Centenary IWM's partnership with 14–18NOW saw the commissioning of an opera, a ballet and the Jeremy Deller masterpiece *'we are here because we're here'* on the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in 2016. From 7pm in the morning First World War soldiers started appearing at train stations, shopping centres or parks around the UK and the numbers built over the day as did the First World War casualties at the Battle. None of the soldiers spoke, but instead handed out a small card with the name and regiment of a soldier who died on the first day of the battle. People were extremely moved by this human memorial. At Waterloo Station normal commuters initially ignored the small number of uniformed men that infiltrated the concourse, but as numbers grew it was clear something really important was happening. By the end of the day the soldiers had interacted with 2 million people and 12 million people followed online. The project was not announced as being by Jeremy Deller and Rufus Norris until the news that evening.

The Balletboyz created a new ballet called *Young Men*. The choreographer used the IWM's film archive showing shell shock as inspiration for an exploration of the impact of the First World War.



The Balletboyz created a new ballet called *Young Men*, first performed at Sadlers Wells. The choreographer used the IWM's film archive showing shell shock as inspiration for an exploration of the impact of the First World War. The performances and subsequent film had an audience of over 500,000.

IWM has gained a great deal of confidence in using multiple art forms from its experience of the First World War Centenary. Its latest seasons have had performance and music as part of their programming, from the music of resistance through to a Syrian death metal band.

It is the museum's responsibility to maximise the use of its collections and to use them in ways which create a bridge between the 'old' and the new. For IWM, this idea culminated in the creation of Peter Jackson's film *They Shall Not Grow Old*, a play on the words of the Binyon poem. We knew from intensive research that younger potential audiences do not engage with grainy black and white film images. They quickly switch off from whatever they are seeing. We needed a way to bring this really ground-breaking historical film to new audiences. The film, which takes oral testimony and 100-year-old black and white film from

the museum's collections, creates a full colour, 4K digitally restored production specifically designed to attract the Youth audience to learning about the First World War. With over 300 million views worldwide, this is example of the ability of museums to 'power up' and use collections in new ways.

The other revolution museums have faced in recent years and brought into sharp focus during Covid-19 is using our content on digital platforms. For example, at IWM, this has led to major changes in the way it creates learning opportunities for all. 'Conflict of Interest' is a brand-new podcast series from the IWM Institute. Over seven episodes, we unpack some of the world's most complex conflicts, from the Yugoslav Wars to the ongoing war in Syria. Celebrity guests ask the simple questions about the most pressing conflicts of our time: What's really going on in Yemen? How did the war in Afghanistan begin? What do we mean by 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland? Guided by an IWM curator, our guest is taken on a journey through the Imperial War Museum in London, discovering the objects, people and stories which bring a conflict to life. Amazingly one podcast stayed a week at the top of the Spotify listing.

A still from Peter Jackson's film *They Shall Not Grow Old*.



I do want to talk about schools at this point. The museum has always wanted to make sure that on-site learning at IWM was not about replicating the classroom experience in the museum. Our programme 'Documentary Challenge' works on mobile phones. Each team of three students takes the part of Producer, Presenter and Camera Operator. Their task is to make a documentary focussing on an object of their choice from the galleries whose story they feel needs to be told. This gives the team total control. They are instructed by text message when to move on to the next tasks and the end result is downloaded to the school to be used in a follow up discussion. The feedback from teachers and pupils has been extraordinary.

As we know, COVID forced many schools to close or to teach mostly online. IWM and several other museums joined forces with BBC Bitesize to provide online learning resources. IWM's Empire and Conflict series has had 1.3m downloads and was the most used resource on the site. It has two elements, firstly continuing professional development for teachers and secondly resources for pupils. Taking this model and creating a new international digital learning hub is our next big idea. We want to create a learning hub which covers conflict around the world from our international and national partners as a single point of access. It would include how to teach difficult narratives, including the holocaust and include newly digitised film, photography and sound images for use in all sorts of settings. Of course, this is currently only an aspiration. It would need massive financial input up front to get content digitalised and edited to the right standards and to create the context materials to enable the material to fit multiple curriculums or keywords. In a creative world, this could be funded by a content levy on broadband infrastructure companies whose business models are based on increasing user time online using increasing amounts of content. This is not going to be a favourite of the companies of course,

but as yet there are no major funding streams available to unlock this huge resource. The fact that some of these companies are incentivised with public money to tackle the issues around rural digital poverty should encourage some kind of giving back.

So digital programming has expanded our work to audiences who may never visit one of our museums. It has also strengthened our role in soft power. The governments agenda on this has largely concentrated on touring exhibitions travelling the world and supporting the work of the British Council. For museums, it has been about a global network of expertise and collaboration. The IWM has partnerships in China and Belarus along with India, Pakistan, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It has overseas development projects in Mauritius, Jamaica and Malawi. There is an opportunity to share more across the globe through more cost effective and deep digital programming and collections sharing that have real impact on different communities with shared histories. Our project in Mauritius is about curatorial and collections support for the development of their Second World War galleries. The galleries will tell the story of their role for the very first time.

So, returning to the title of this lecture. I hope I have demonstrated that Museums can help create Global Citizens who are more aware of their impact on the world; have developed the ability to question single point narratives, ie to see the issue from multiple sides and have been supported in the exploration of their identity. In working in creative and inspirational ways our museums are helping to build a better future and I hope you have been inspired by the way your museums are moving away from places to visit on a rainy day (although we welcome you doing that too!).

Dame Diane Lees DBE

Dame Diane Lees DBE
Director-General, Imperial War Museums



Since October 2008, Diane Lees has served as Director-General of the Imperial War Museums.

Diane Lees began her career as an historic buildings researcher and then moved into exhibitions, education and interpretation. She has worked on some of the most challenging and exciting projects in the country, including the rescue and relocation of a hat block manufacturer's workshop in central Manchester, the recovery and display of the Mary Rose flagship in Portsmouth Harbour and the redisplay of the Nelson Galleries at the Royal Naval Museum. She project-managed the creation of the UK standard for the recording of information about museum collections (SPECTRUM) and was responsible for the creation of the only museum of law in the country, the multi-award-winning Galleries of Justice in Nottingham.

She is a Trustee of the IWM Development Trust and The Gerry Holdsworth Special Forces Trust. She serves as Vice President of the American Air Museum in Britain, is a member of the Women Leaders in Museums Network (WLMN) and from April 2013 to March 2017 chaired the National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC). She sits on the judging panels of the Museums + Heritage Awards and the 2022 Art Fund Museum of the Year.

She is also a member of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust's Experts' Reference Group and the DCMS Cultural and Heritage Capital Advisory Board. Since April 2018 she has been Pro-Chancellor and Chair of the University of Lincoln's Board of Governors. She is a member of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths and a Freeman of the City of London.

Diane Lees was awarded a CBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list in January 2015 and a DBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list in January 2022 for services to museums. She was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree by the University of Reading in July 2015 and an Honorary Doctor of Arts degree by Nottingham Trent University in June 2017.