



‘Why should not Citadels become Academies?’ Transatlantic Tercentenaries, Higher Education and Local Pasts in Britain after the First World War

MARTHA VANDREI

Department of History, University of Exeter

Abstract

This article examines two transatlantic tercentenaries that took place around the end of the First World War: that of the execution of Sir Walter Raleigh (1918) and that of the sailing of the *Mayflower* (1920). By sheer historical happenstance, these two major commemorative events were both centred on the county of Devon. Raleigh was associated with the city of Exeter, while the *Mayflower* pilgrims were indelibly linked with the maritime city of Plymouth. This thrusting into the limelight of two Devonian cities coincided with a regional effort to expand university education in the southwest. This article examines these two tercentenaries as case studies in the interaction between the transnational, regional and local dimensions of commemorative culture and historical narrative in Britain. It shows how, in both cases, internationalism fed regional rivalries, with national agendas peripheral at best. The article’s second, related aim is to highlight a neglected aspect of scholarship on twentieth-century memorialisation, namely educational institutions as legacies of historical commemorative events. In both the Raleigh and the *Mayflower* anniversaries, links between the British locale and internationalism superseded any national aims or agendas, with both Exeter and Plymouth vying to be the regional leader in higher education, each bolstered by their claims to significance in America. Although neither scheme ultimately came to fruition, the tercentenaries nevertheless left behind educational legacies, calling into question the stark divide between ‘public’ and ‘academic’ history.

On 4 August 1917, Walter Hines Page, American ambassador to Britain, was in Plymouth, the largest city in west Devon and proud home of

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much naval and maritime history. His visit marked exactly three years since the start of the First World War, which America had entered only months before. Its belated declaration on the side of the Allies had been preceded by a drawn-out period of uncertain neutrality, easily construed as indifference by the British public. But while Page's American compatriots were the objects of suspicion, Page himself was well liked and well respected by his British hosts. He had advocated indefatigably for America to enter the war, an effort which took a toll on his health – he lived just long enough to see the end of the war. Among his American compatriots, however, there was suspicion that Page's Anglophilia was of a pathological kind and that his long-standing support for war with Germany was merely symptomatic of his affliction.

Having travelled from his official residence in London, Page arrived at Plymouth station to cheering crowds: 'all the way through the town the streets were lined with all the inhabitants and more – apparently millions of 'em ... all the people in that part of the world were there gathered to see the show'.¹ They were eager to see Page, but also to hear the speech he had come west to give. Page understood that there was still a suspicion amongst many Britons that America was not fully committed to the war effort and careful assurances were needed to convince them. Reflecting on his reasons for giving the speech, Page wrote that he felt that he had to do something to reassure the 'provincial Englander' of 'what we have done and mean to do'.²

However, he also felt strongly that the wary attitude amongst the British was born of genuine ignorance about America and Americans, which it was his duty, and the duty of other Americans, to help to dispel. To President Wilson's closest adviser, Edward House, Page explained, 'There is an eager and even pathetic curiosity to hear all the details, to hear, in fact, anything about the United States; and what the British do not know about the United States would fill the British Museum.'³ Page's speech was in fact the first foray into the very territory it mapped out: the text of the speech was published that year in Hodder and Stoughton's 'Pamphlets on the War' series as *The Union of Two Great Peoples*, reaching an audience well beyond its initial hearers.⁴ He lamented that 'a vast deal of ignorance' prevailed between the two peoples, and, as an Anglophile and representative of America, he was insistent that what was needed now was a new and fervent emphasis on cultural understanding and communication.

Periodically interrupted by cheers and applause, Page proclaimed to his Plymouth audience that what was needed was a plan for overcoming the mutual ignorance that divided two nations which, given their many

¹ B. J. Hendrick, *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page* (London 1924), pp. 316–18.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

⁴ W. H. Page, *The Union of Two Great Peoples: A Speech by W. H. Page ... Delivered at Plymouth, August 4th 1917* (London, 1917); Hendrick, *Life and Letters*, p. 316.

shared historical moments, should have natural sympathy with one another. Indeed, to his eyes history was absolutely fundamental to this mutual understanding and sympathy, and to the future of the Anglo-American relationship. Tellingly, Page viewed the best means for disseminating this, not via the high-political or diplomatic channels to which he was accustomed, but through the efforts of individuals on both sides of the Atlantic. That being the case, Page suggested that new school textbooks on American history should be urgently compiled and made required reading for all schoolchildren in Britain. This was already the case in America, where new history books were already being culled of the old anti-English bitterness aroused by the American Revolution and the War of 1812. For adults, popular lectures, given by Americans in Britain and by Britons in America, could form the backbone of a new kind of public instruction that would reach large numbers of people. This could be coupled with cutting-edge media like radio broadcasts and the cinema, so that citizens of both nations could forge and maintain relationships that had long been the remit of diplomats. Mutual intercourse through reciprocal lectures, connected popular cultures, personal visits and tourism, and conversation; these were the new forms of diplomacy Page had in mind.⁵ It would mean the melding of shared past narrative with future-facing friendship.

Page's speech came at an opportune moment, but also, more significantly, in an opportune place for foregrounding a shared Anglo-American past. Extensive press coverage and eventual publication meant Page's audience became a national one, but on the day he spoke with his immediate hearers very much in mind, and from a position of genuine knowledge and enthusiasm about the west of England, he was a regular traveller to the region, on account of his health. 'I cannot tell you how deeply you move me by your generous English and warm-hearted Devon welcome ...'. He moved swiftly from praising the county's manners to praising its history. Given his immediate audience, Page naturally turned to the *Mayflower* pilgrims, who had set sail from Plymouth in 1620. The tercentenary of the voyage was just around the corner and Page was quick to exploit the coincidence of a major historical anniversary with the fact that the Americans and the English were fighting, for once, on the same side: 'The *Mayflower* sailed from here nearly three hundred years ago with its precious freight. There have come back American warships, no doubt with the descendants of those same men...'⁶

Page's invocation of the *Mayflower* voyage had connotations for his Plymouth audience, but there was another tercentenary, also with Devonian connections, of which Page was very much aware, but which he did not mention on his visit to Plymouth: that of the death of Sir Walter Raleigh. Raleigh's execution in 1618 was, by the twentieth century, widely considered to be a travesty of history, one of the first

⁵ Hendrick, *Life and Letters*, pp. 344–6.

⁶ Page, *Two Great Peoples*, p. 1.

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black marks on the reputation of the Stuart monarchs. This was a view shared by both American and British commentators. Walter Page was a native of North Carolina, whose capital was named after the illustrious sailor, explorer, fighter, writer and courtier whose combination of physical courage, principled patriotism and polymathic intelligence was seen as exemplifying all that was best about the England of the seventeenth century. As it happened, Devon's cathedral city, Exeter, is the closest city to Raleigh's birthplace at Hayes Barton. The more westerly, maritime city of Plymouth was well known as the last port of departure of the *Mayflower* pilgrims.

So by sheer historical happenstance, the stage was set for two major commemorations against the backdrop of the First World War: the one focused on Exeter in 1918; the other based in Plymouth in 1920. But while the Anglo-American conversation around these events was important, so too were the local rivalries that came to the fore in Devon, as the efforts to create a new university in the southwest became hitched to the tercentenaries of the *Mayflower* voyage and the death of Sir Walter. As early as 1917, educational campaigners from across Devon and Cornwall had sought permission to found an independent degree-conferring university.⁷ But as plans were being discussed for the two tercentenaries, the potential emerged for an American connection, and thus American financial support, for a Devonian university. The question was whether Exeter or Plymouth, Raleigh or the Pilgrims, would take the spoils.

This article has two related aims. First, these tercentenaries act as a case study of the interaction between the transnational, regional and local dimensions in commemorative culture and historical narrative. Page was a key player in both tercentenaries, as were the local delegations from Exeter and Plymouth respectively. In this context, discourses of the British *nation* played a far less significant role than local or regional historical narratives and their international connections, however tenuous the latter tended to be. The second, related aim is to highlight one of the more neglected aspects of scholarship on twentieth-century memorialisation, namely the creation of educational institutions as a physical and enduring legacy of historical commemorative events. Both the *Mayflower* and the Raleigh tercentenaries sparked discussions over the possibility of new universities in Plymouth and Exeter built on modern, democratic lines, and at least in part with American donors, students, and scholars in mind. In both the Raleigh and the *Mayflower* anniversaries, links between the British locale and internationalism superseded any national aims or agendas, with both cities vying to become the regional leader in higher education, each bolstered by their claims to significance in America.

⁷ University colleges, like the one that existed in Exeter from 1901, prepared students for entry into the universities of London, Oxford, or Cambridge. See J. Taylor, *The Impact of the First World War on British Universities* (London, 2018). University College Exeter would become the University College of the South West in 1922, when it also acquired a campus; see W. Whyte, *Redbrick: A Social and Architectural History of Britain's Civic Universities* (Oxford, 2016), p. 218.

Although neither of the two tercentenaries resulted in the longed-for university in the southwest, both did result in educational legacies on a smaller scale. The concluding part of this article details those legacies and suggests that public, even popular, education has intimate connections with moments of historical celebration.

Thus, this article presents a new aspect to understanding local historical memory in a global context, as well as to our thinking about the division between elite historical narratives and popular commemoration.⁸ Historians have long been aware of the ways public commemoration and the construction of the past, managed by a group of ‘elites’, could feed into discourses of national unity and shared memory in the public imagination.⁹ From the nineteenth century onward, what have become known as ‘public history’ discourses have often been understood as key components in nationalist and exceptionalist agendas.¹⁰ Historical anniversaries, commemorations and centenaries held huge fascination for the British public, in part because they could support national unity. But equally, an intense focus on historical narratives could lead to local and regional tensions, with nationhood being deployed as a rhetorical flourish, the audience for which was simultaneously international and local. As recent scholarship on the Shakespeare tercentenary in 1916 has highlighted, internationalism was high on the agenda for architects of large-scale commemorations, even when the event or person was inveterately ‘English’ in character.¹¹

And while scholars’ views have differed on the extent to which history and the past held purchase in the public imagination as the twentieth century wore violently on, recent research has made clear that the fascination with the past persisted throughout the period, particularly at a local, grassroots level.¹² While Roland Quinault has emphasised the elite nature of much commemorative activity in the period, Paul Readman has shown the depth and breadth of historical culture in the period by

⁸ This is especially relevant in the context of the expansion of higher education after the First World War. See G. Brewis, S. Hellowell and D. Laqua, ‘Rebuilding the universities after the Great War: ex-service students, scholarships, and the reconstruction of student life in England’, *History: The Journal of the Historical Association*, 105 (2020), pp. 82–106.

⁹ E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (London, 1983) is the classic study. See also: G. Cubitt and A. Warren (eds), *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives* (Manchester, 2000); P. Mandler, *History and National Life* (London, 2002); B. Melman, *A Culture of History: English Uses of the Past, 1800–1953* (Oxford, 2006); B. Melman, ‘The power of the past: history and modernity in the Victorian world’, in M. Hewitt (ed.), *The Victorian World* (London, 2013), pp. 466–83.

¹⁰ M. Vandrei, *Queen Boudica and Historical Culture in Britain: An Image of Truth* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 13–14.

¹¹ G. McMullan, P. Mead, A. G. Ferguson, K. Flaherty and M. Houlahan, *Antipodal Shakespeare: Remembering and Forgetting in Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, 1916–2016* (London, 2018). On Shakespeare in colonial and postcolonial contexts: A. G. Ferguson, *The Shakespeare Hut: A Study of Performance, Memory, and Identity, 1916–1923* (London, 2019).

¹² The extent of participation in historical pageants is one of the most powerful testimonies to this; see: A. Bartie, P. Caton, L. Fleming, M. Freeman, T. Hulme, A. Hutton and P. Readman, *The Redress of the Past: Historical Pageants in Britain, 1905–2016* (database, published online, 2016, at <<http://www.historicalpageants.ac.uk/pageants/>>).

demonstrating how ordinary men and women became deeply involved in the history of their locality.¹³ We can also see this trend in the growth of preservation movements, historical tourism, the commemoration boom and in the growth of popular, even participatory history, with the added ingredient of an increasingly commercialised mass media.¹⁴

There is a large body of scholarship about British historical culture in the early part of the twentieth century. Within that there is a slim but vibrant strand of historiography specifically focused on the importance of the past in the transatlantic, Anglo-American context. As Erik Goldstein, Melanie Hall and T. G. Otte have shown, the years immediately before and after the First World War were rich in opportunities to mark shared Anglo-American moments as a means of signifying an Anglo-American future.¹⁵ The diplomatic historian Brian Etheridge has identified 'memory diplomacy' as a specific form of political effort which aims to use historical-cultural exchange to achieve diplomatic ends.¹⁶ Arguably, the case studies I present here help to show that the precise significances and mechanisms of memory can be understood most effectively on a local level. The role of individual people and institutions, and attentiveness to local dynamics, such as education provision, help to complicate what can appear to be a simple story of national exchange.

On a somewhat more politically elevated level, historians of Anglo-American relations have emphasised the importance of a shared idea of Anglo-Saxon ethnicity.¹⁷ It is possible that this can be overstated,

¹³ R. Quinault, 'The cult of the centenary, c. 1784–1914', *Historical Research*, 71 (1998), pp. 303–23; P. Readman, 'The place of the past in English culture, c. 1890–1914', *Past and Present*, 186 (2005), pp. 147–99.

¹⁴ J. de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (London, 2009); M. Hall (ed.), *Towards World Heritage: International Origins of the Preservation Movement, 1870–1930* (Farnham, 2011); A. Swenson and P. Mandler (eds), *From Plunder to Preservation: Britain and the Heritage of Empire, c. 1800–1914* (Oxford, 2013); P. Betts and C. Ross (eds), *Heritage in the Modern World, Past and Present*, 226 Issue Supplement 10 (2015); A. Bartie, L. Fleming, M. Freeman, A. Hutton and P. Readman (eds), *Restaging the Past: Historical Pageants, Culture and Society in Modern Britain* (London, 2020).

¹⁵ E. Goldstein, 'America and the King Alfred millenary celebrations' in T. G. Otte (ed.), *The Age of Anniversaries: The Cult of Commemoration, 1895–1925* (London, 2017). T. G. Otte, 'The shrine at Sulgrave: the preservation of the Washington ancestral home as an "English Mount Vernon" and transatlantic relations', in M. Hall (ed.), *Towards World Heritage: International Origins of the Preservation Movement, 1870–1930* (Farnham, 2011); M. Holleran, 'America's early historical preservation movement (1850–1930) in a transatlantic context', in M. Hall (ed.), *Towards World Heritage*, pp. 181–99.

¹⁶ B. Etheridge, "'The Desert Fox", memory diplomacy, and the German question in early Cold War America', *Diplomatic History*, 32 (2008), pp. 207–38. For an Anglo-American example: S. Edwards, "'A great Englishman": George Washington and Anglo-American memory diplomacy, c. 1890–1925', in R. Hendershot and S. Marsh (eds), *Culture Matters: Anglo-American Relations and the 'Intangibles' of Specialness* (Manchester, 2020), pp. 158–88; E. Goldstein, 'Diplomacy in the service of history: Anglo-American relations and the return of the Bradford History of Plymouth Colony, 1898', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 25 (2014), pp. 26–40.

¹⁷ The most recent treatment is D. Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race: Empire and the Utopian Destiny of Anglo-America* (Princeton, 2020). Bell examines four individuals who imagined an Anglo-American union based on ideas of Anglo-Saxon racial affinity in the early twentieth century. Although suggestive, 'high' intellectual accounts simply fail to capture the range of attitudes across the

especially by intellectual historians working with an emphasis on a particular stratum of society. Changing ethnic and demographic make-up led to complex forms of identity construction in America itself, as well as its relations to other nations. Anti-English sentiment had been a mainstay in nineteenth-century American politics, and although a rapprochement was evident in some quarters after the war, there remained a strong sense of grievance on the American side.¹⁸ This was driven to greater heights by Irish immigration and the Irish independence movement, with which newly arrived co-religionists in other ethnic groups may well have sympathised, much more than with English interests.¹⁹ Undiminished, even growing anxiety about Britain's imperialist designs following the close of the war also played a role.²⁰

But this caginess was reciprocated in Britain, too, as Page's reflections on his Plymouth visit demonstrated. One way to achieve a balance between the attractions of ethnic Anglo-Saxonism for certain American and English diplomats and the suspicions of citizens was to deploy it alongside more transferrable abstract values like justice, the rule of law, and democracy, all of which could be cast as constituents of both British and American identities. Given a liberal gloss, symbolically important historical events and artefacts, most notably Magna Carta, were amenable to international, 'Anglo-world' discourse.²¹ However, because the democratic, liberal values thought to be embodied in Magna Carta had broad appeal, it was available as a near-universal symbol, regardless of its origin in the alien world of medieval Runnymede. Tellingly, Magna Carta and the great documents of American sovereignty, the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, were all invoked throughout the First World War, reaching beyond an English-speaking audience.²² As David Monger has shown, this was significant in the context of a European war in which 'supranational' shared attributes were useful for strengthening European allegiances.²³ Supranational signifiers,

linguistic, religious and ethnic diversity of early twentieth-century America, or the complex processes of identity formation that would have been an important part of the lived experience of millions of new arrivals to the United States in the period.

¹⁸ On Anglophobia: S. Tuffnell, "'Uncle Sam is to be sacrificed": Anglophobia in late nineteenth-century politics and culture', *American Nineteenth Century History*, 12 (2011), pp. 77–99, esp. 91–3; J. E. Moser, *Twisting the Lion's Tail: Anglophobia in the United States, 1921–1948* (Basingstoke, 1998).

¹⁹ R. A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton, 2004), p. 3. Kazal suggests that a working-class German Catholic newly arrived in America felt more affinity with an Irish or Italian co-religionist than with a middle-class German Lutheran; the primary divide was between 'white' and 'black' in working-class neighbourhoods. Kazal, p. 247.

²⁰ S. Bowman, *The Pilgrims Society and Public Diplomacy, 1895–1945* (Edinburgh, 2018), pp. 150–1; Moser, *Anglophobia*, ch. 1.

²¹ D. M. MacRaidl, S. Ellis and S. Bowman, 'Interdependence day and Magna Charta: James Hamilton's public diplomacy in the Anglo-World, 1907–1940', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 12 (2014), pp. 140–62. Also T. G. Otte, 'Centenaries, self-historicization and the mobilization of the masses', in Otte (ed.), *Age of Anniversaries*, pp. 1–35.

²² Bowman, *Pilgrims Society*, p. 130; D. Monger, *Patriotism and Propaganda in the First World War: The National War Aims Committee and Civilian Morale* (Liverpool, 2012), pp. 162–3.

²³ Monger, *Patriotism*, pp. 92–3.

while attached in some contexts to a racialised Anglo-Saxonism, could also appeal beyond these quite literally tribal designations.

But uncovering the real power of the past demands looking at a local material reality. A consideration of the importance of the direct link between British locality and transatlanticism of the kind offered here adds much-needed nuance to an Anglo-American relationship that can be taken for granted as involving two affiliated national identities under one ethnic heading, rather than an array of local and regional identities that rested on historical narrative as much as on ethnic ties.²⁴ The period after the First World War was a time when Britain was searching for a role in an international future, with America a key partner in that future. But at the same time, localities had their own agendas, hopes and ambitions, and sometimes these were in tension with the bigger national agenda.

I

It was because of Walter Page that the two Devon tercentenaries came into being. Years of anxiety and overwork took its toll on Page, who was forced by ill health to resign as ambassador in September 1918, but before he left, he had planted seeds of a Raleigh tercentenary to take place in 1918, and a *Mayflower* one two years later. However, because of his involvement, the discussions around these events, ostensibly separated by two years and fifty miles of Devonian coast, took place at almost precisely the same time. This was also because, as a much more well-known transatlantic event, Plymouth's *Mayflower* celebration was bound to take more intense preparation; thus, *Mayflower* chatter was evident in early 1918, months before any serious attempt was made to organise a festival for Raleigh.

Discussion of the *Mayflower* was the result of a speech in March 1918 by the charismatic Quaker leader and scholar, James Rendel Harris.²⁵ He called on the Free Churches of Britain to come together to celebrate the *Mayflower* voyage as one of the major events of nonconformist history. Thus, the *Mayflower* event gained an addition layer of significance as a formative event in non-Anglican Protestant history alongside its Anglo-American one. Rendel's reading was compatible with Page's view of the *Mayflower* story as the latest in a series of transatlantic crossings: from unremarkable merchant ships to modern-day warships. It also happened that Rendel, as he was known to his vast network of friends and colleagues, was a proud Plymouthian by birth. He was well connected in the scholarly and academic community, having held posts at Cambridge and Johns Hopkins University, before becoming Director of Studies at Woodbrooke Quaker College. Rendel anticipated that his suggestion of

²⁴ For an interesting comparison: S. Edwards "'From here Lincoln came": Anglo-Saxonism, the special relationship, and the anglicisation of Abraham Lincoln, c.1860–1970', *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, 11 (2013), pp. 22–46.

²⁵ James Rendel Harris has been the subject of a recent and very thorough biography: A. Falchetta, *The Daily Discoveries of a Bible Scholar and Manuscript Hunter: A Biography of James Rendel Harris* (London, 2018).

a series of tercentenary events led by the Free Churches would bring together a large proportion of the nation's population, though he also thought that there should be a corresponding civic arm to the celebrations as well. And while Page had hinted at it, Rendel was probably the first person to make a serious case that Plymouth should be the centre of *Mayflower* tercentenary activity.²⁶ Even as Rendel acknowledged that a number of towns in Britain, and indeed the Netherlands, had special claims to the *Mayflower* story, none could match 'Old Plymouth', the port from which the pilgrims made their final departure.²⁷

Thus, his most ambitious plan, a plan for a new 'Mayflower University', was reserved for Plymouth itself. Rendel first made this public suggestion in London, but word quickly spread through the newspapers of the southwest of England. The *Western Morning News* was especially keen to get the opinion of one man in particular, W. H. Lewis, a lecturer in chemistry who also happened to be the honorary secretary of the Committee for the Furtherance of University Education in the Southwest. Lewis, presumably rather bewildered, admitted that it was the first he had heard of it. Still, he took a diplomatic line and professed to be happy to hear of any plan that would strengthen 'University influence' in the region.²⁸

The Committee for the Furtherance of University Education in the South-west originated in 1917, centred in University College, Exeter. It was formed with the aim of amalgamating the four principal colleges in Devon and Cornwall, located in Exeter, Newton Abbot, Plymouth and Camborne, into a federal, degree-conferring university on the model of that recently established in Wales.²⁹ The idea was supported by local luminaries including the Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall, the Lord Lieutenant of Devon, successive chairmen of the Devon County Council, the MPs for Plymouth and Exeter, as well as many leaders in regional education, such as the Principals of Exeter and Plymouth College. Teacher training colleges, headmasters and headmistresses, the National Union of Teachers, the Workers' Educational Association and academics with local links were also represented on the Committee. Its members had already begun to drum up wider support for the Committee's work, visiting working men's associations and adult education centres as early as 1917.³⁰ Meetings were held under local Labour organisations at Exeter, Plymouth, Redruth, St Austell, Newton Abbot, Torquay and Yeovil; all

²⁶ Other towns and cities also laid claim; see T. Hulme, 'Memories of the Mayflower in Southampton', *Hampshire Papers: Second Series*, 8 (2020), pp. 1–20.

²⁷ T. Hulme, 'The Mayflower and "Mother Plymouth": Anglo-America, civic culture and the urban past', *Cultural and Social History*, (2021), pp. 1–21.

²⁸ 'Southwest university scheme', *Western Morning News*, 15 March 1918.

²⁹ Plymouth was then a school of navigation and maritime sciences. The Camborne School of Mines specialised in geology and earth sciences. Newton Abbot was home to an agricultural college. Only Exeter offered any strength in the traditional humanities subjects. B. W. Clapp, *The University of Exeter: A History* (Exeter, 1982), p. 48.

³⁰ 'Yeovil Men's adult school', *Western Chronicle*, 5 Oct. 1917.

around the southwest, the idea of a university 'met with a most hearty welcome'.³¹

It is evident from Rendel's archive that he was not aware of the Committee's work when he mooted the idea of a university at Plymouth in March 1918.³² Still, never the type to give up on a 'big thing' once it had come into his head, he drafted a handful of speeches on the 'Mayflower University', laying out the scheme in detail, though each was slightly different depending on its audience.³³ In regard to location he was unequivocal: Plymouth was clearly the place, but more specifically, the university should occupy the historically and symbolically important Citadel, a long-established military site near Plymouth Hoe. With German surrender on the horizon even in early 1918, a converted military establishment would be the perfect symbolic locale for new intellectual and cultural relations between two victorious nations committed to international peace. As Rendel put it in his 'Interlude', an historical drama in miniature that he wrote for the *Mayflower* tercentenary pageant: 'Why should not citadels become academies and barracks halls of residence?'³⁴ For those concerned about the potential for destructive renovations of the historic Citadel, Rendel was a convincing spokesman for blending old and new: his plan would keep the existing historic walls, drawbridge, and other 'picturesque features', with only the modern barracks making way for more appropriate accommodation.³⁵

He was equally idealistic about the intellectual remit of the institution. It would be a degree-conferring university that, like its ancient counterparts at Oxford, Cambridge and St Andrews, would emphasise the humanities and the 'pure' sciences. In at least one version of the idea, he specifically omitted medicine and law, declaring them too expensive. A more surprising omission, given Rendel was a biblical scholar, was a school of divinity; he feared it might breed factionalism. Instead, the emphasis would be firmly on 'the Arts and Sciences, [with] special attention to be paid to research in English literature and in Natural Science'. The Mayflower University was to be a serious research and teaching institution that would 'avoid the mistake of modern Universities of putting all the money into buildings, the ambition being rather to endow men first and buildings after'.³⁶

Rendel declared that the Mayflower University would welcome scholars from 'the two halves of the Anglo-Saxon race', picking up on a language common to the educated elites of the time.³⁷ In practical terms,

³¹ 'University for the southwest', *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 10 Oct. 1917.

³² He only started collecting newspaper clippings about the pre-existing scheme after he had announced his own.

³³ Draft plans for Mayflower University, James Rendel Harris Archive, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre [hereafter cited as JRH], JRH1/1/6/1/ 27.

³⁴ J. R. Harris, *The Return of the Mayflower: An Interlude* (Manchester, 1919).

³⁵ 'Mayflower scheme', *Western Morning News*, 23 March 1918.

³⁶ 'Mayflower tercentenary: an Anglo-American University at Plymouth', *The Observer*, 31 March 1918.

³⁷ Otte, 'The shrine at Sulgrave', pp. 120–1.

this meant that the first professorial chair at the Mayflower University would be in the study of English language and literature, the ‘foremost common possession’ of Britain and America.³⁸ However, he was keen that the ‘inter-Atlantic’ beginning should expand into a more international sphere. Taking very literally the symbolism of the *Mayflower* voyage, places would be available to students and academics from Holland. Moreover, since so many Syrian and Armenian scholars had already taken refuge in Britain, there was every possibility of a future ‘Oriental’ dimension to the Mayflower University.³⁹ Rendel estimated, and reported to his hearers, that the university would initially cost £2 million, though he confidently hoped that half of that might come from America. The other half might come from the wider British empire: cities and regions in Australia might support professorial chairs; Indian princes might endow chairs in Sanskrit. Partly as a tribute to James Hope Moulton, a scholar of Persian religion, Rendel hoped that the Parsee community might also fund a chair. The Mayflower University seemed to grow ever more international with each iteration.

Commenting on Rendel’s scheme, newspapers in the southwest made links back to Page’s speech, suggesting that the Mayflower University fulfilled the ambassador’s vision for ‘closer intercourse and interchange of knowledge and ideas between the two countries’ and the encouragement of British students to go to American Universities, and of more American students to British Universities – pilgrimages both ways.⁴⁰ However, press commentary was also at pains to underline the very different remits of Rendel’s university and the existing efforts of the Committee for the Furtherance of University Education, asserting that the Mayflower University ‘has, of course, no connection with that for establishing a University for the South-West of England. That is a purely local affair: Dr Harris’s is international.’⁴¹

Although this statement was, as we will see, difficult to maintain in practice, these differences were reflected in the international range and importance of the people on whose support Rendel was able to call. This included the former British ambassador to America, Viscount James Bryce, an old friend of Rendel’s, as was Gilbert Murray, Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford and vocal internationalist in the League of Nations. Murray voiced his support to the *New York Times* while on a visit to the United States, but he was more reluctant in private.⁴² The

³⁸ ‘Mayflower University’, *Western Evening Herald*, 3 Dec. 1918.

³⁹ Rendel and his wife Helen (who died in 1914) spent years helping orphans, refugees and scholars from war-torn regions; see Falcetta, *Daily Discoveries*, pp. 279–90.

⁴⁰ ‘Pilgrim Fathers’, *Western Morning News*, 15 March 1918.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² ‘University proposed as a war memorial’, *New York Times*, 22 March 1918; G. Murray to JRH, 12 May 1920, Cadbury Research Library, Special Collections, University of Birmingham. DA21/1/2/1/34/19.

American-born Conservative MP for Plymouth, Waldorf Astor, was cautiously supportive.⁴³

Unlike his more cautious supporters Rendel believed in the cultural-diplomatic nature of his scheme, and most assuredly in its symbolic importance as a peaceful means of showing solidarity. But the Mayflower University was also aimed at elevating the status of his native Plymouth and, quite genuinely, at founding a truly democratic, modern university in a city with long-standing martial associations. A university in the centre of Old Plymouth would regenerate and ensure the future of an area soon to outlive its military utility. Moreover, the university could alleviate the deficit in working people's education, an aspect of the scheme Rendel was keen to highlight as a core tenet of any truly democratic transatlantic university. Speaking to an audience at the Plymouth Co-operative Society, Rendel emphasised the working class's importance: without support from workers, the university could have little chance of success. He also maintained that, as a 'democratic university', there would be 'no disqualifications under the head of religion, sex, or social position, and there should be no fees', and education would be provided on the basis of merit, not status. Rendel proclaimed that future leaders of the labour movement would be educated at the Mayflower University.⁴⁴

Naturally enough, many people in Old Plymouth were in favour, with the American connection given as much prominence as the local. The Plymouth Free Church Council lent its support, which was hardly surprising given Rendel's standing in the organisation.⁴⁵ The mayor of Plymouth gave it his blessing, both because of the possibilities this would bring for Plymouth, and because it would be a further bond of union between Britain and America. Press coverage followed, declaring the University at Plymouth would be 'a development of vast importance to the whole of civilisation'.⁴⁶ Plymouth's status as the primary nexus between Britain and America was bolstered by successive appeals to Page's 1917 Speech, which was cited in the newspapers.⁴⁷ By the summer of 1918, the Mayflower University, perhaps only partly in jest, was even being talked of as an integral part of Plymouth's anticipated post-war renewal. When an unsuccessful application was made to the city's Sanitation Committee for a manure works in the neighbourhood of the Barbican, one correspondent to the *Western Evening Herald* welcomed its refusal:

Let us keep the Barbican as sweet as present conditions allow in the hope that in the Plymouth of the future, when a new drive is opened into it

⁴³ 'A "Mayflower University"', *Western Morning News*, published letter from W. Astor, 22 March 1918.

⁴⁴ 'Mayflower University', *Western Evening Herald*, 3 Dec. 1918.

⁴⁵ 'The Mayflower tercentenary', *Western Morning News*, 28 March 1918.

⁴⁶ 'Dr Rendel Harris's great scheme', *Western Evening Herald*, 25 March 1918.

⁴⁷ 'Mayflower scheme', *Western Morning News*, 23 March 1918.

from the Hoe, running below the Anglo-American University buildings, the smoke of a manure works will not disturb the nostrils of the learned.⁴⁸

II

The spring and summer of 1918 opened up another front in the ongoing battle for higher education in the southwest. However, the previous regional effort, centred in Exeter, was already well advanced. This meant that local press coverage was often confused, inevitably reporting on the two schemes at once. Despite efforts to distinguish between the ‘international’ and ‘local’ plans, it was inevitable that the two came into conflict. Typical was the contradictory coverage in the *Western Morning News* of 19 April 1918, which reported that Rendel had met with the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, Sir Arthur Shipley, who backed the idea of the Mayflower University at Plymouth.⁴⁹ This did not seem to be misreporting on either the paper’s or Rendel’s part. The day after this meeting with Shipley, Rendel wrote in private to his secretary, Irene Speller, that Shipley ‘endorsed the scheme heart and soul; evidently knew about it already. He is the head of the Marine Biological Association, which has its headquarters just under the Plymouth Citadel! He is full of ideas and recommendations’.⁵⁰ But in an interview with the same newspaper, reported on the very same day his support was announced, Shipley gave every suggestion of dampening Rendel’s ambitions. Instead he suggested Plymouth should retain its strengths in marine biology and shipbuilding within a wider scheme for university education in the southwest.⁵¹ This was exactly the arrangement that the Committee for the Furtherance of University Education in the South-west proposed, meaning Shipley was probably aware of the potential for the two schemes to be competitive rather than complementary.

By the time Shipley made his statement, fault-lines were emerging in Devon and even reaching west into Cornwall. Comment in the *Western Independent* suggested a degree of scepticism, and even a sense of betrayal, amongst other regional colleges in the southwest.

We in Exeter are not jealous of Plymouth, although naturally we view, with more than a little interest, a proposal which definitely relegates our University College to a subsidiary position and, frankly, throws aside the scheme for a University in the South-West as superfluous.⁵² Let me say at once that I believe the gentlemen in Plymouth who are cooperating with us in the South-West University scheme, are absolutely loyal; but, naturally,

⁴⁸ ‘Notes of the day’, *Western Evening Herald*, 11 June 1918.

⁴⁹ ‘Mayflower University; support of Vice Chancellor of Cambridge’, *Western Morning News*, 19 April 1918.

⁵⁰ JRH to Irene Speller, 15 April 1918: JRH/1/4/2/9.

⁵¹ ‘Cambridge University’s Interest’, *Western Morning News*, 19 April 1918.

⁵² Their ‘university college’ could not confer degrees – that was a power the University of Exeter would not attain until 1955.

if philanthropic people in America are prepared to put down two million pounds, it is not for them to look such a noble gift horse in the mouth.⁵³

But the reporter went on in a vein that seemed to suggest jealousy was not at all far from the writer's mind: 'frankly I am not enamoured of the idea of Plymouth being the seat of the University, and Exeter merely a constituent member of it'.

By decisively claiming Plymouth as the home of the Anglo-American Mayflower University, Rendel inadvertently laid bare latent regional tensions around where the centre of a southwestern university ought rightfully to be. Exeter, which was denying any jealousy of Plymouth, was itself looked on with suspicion by representatives from Cornwall. In May 1918, Cornwall Council's Education Committee refused to back a petition to the Board of Education for funds to endow the college at Exeter as an independent university; it was widely thought that would be more acceptable than the federated version, which turned out to be the case. Cornwall insisted that it would only support a federated scheme, with no question of Exeter being given priority. A letter from the secretary of the Committee for the Furtherance of University Education in the South-west, writing from Exeter College, was conciliatory, but there were powerful voices of suspicion in Cornwall. Arthur Quiller-Couch, Professor of English at Cambridge and a member of Cornwall Council, declared that it was too soon to determine a 'centre' and that 'whatever University they had in the South-west, and they were now told there was an Anglo-American possibility, or whatever combination of Universities they had, it should be brought under one scheme'.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, commentary in the *Western Daily Mercury* noted that there was 'a certain hostility in Exeter towards the larger ideas which have been propagated by Dr. Rendel Harris'. After all, if an international university were to be founded at Plymouth this 'would necessitate a readjustment' of regional arrangements.⁵⁵ This was a diplomatic way of suggesting that Exeter would be swept away beneath a tidal wave of American cash, while Plymouth would rise, glittering with new-found wealth, to the surface.

III

Ironically, it was a visit by the mayor of Plymouth to the ailing Page that led to the celebration of Raleigh, centred in Exeter, which gave rise to a rival suggestion of a Raleigh University. The people of Plymouth, in grateful remembrance of Page's fine speech in 1917, had been planning to bestow on him the freedom of their city, but his failing health meant the journey west was not possible. Instead, the mayor of Plymouth and his entire Council came to the ambassador's residence to present Page with this honour, and in response Page mustered the strength to deliver

⁵³ "'The Mayflower University'", *Western Independent*, 31 March 1918.

⁵⁴ 'S.W. University, Cornwall Council and site question', *Western Morning News*, 15 May 1918.

⁵⁵ 'The university question ...', *Western Daily Mercury*, 15 May 1918.

a five-minute speech, likely to be his last public utterance in Britain. It was a plea for Anglo-American unity, copies of which he presented to each member of the delegation.⁵⁶ The Plymouth visitors reminded the former ambassador that the *Mayflower* tercentenary was only two years away, and Page declared that if there as anything he could do to help the celebration, he would. Page also suggested that a member of the North Carolina Historical and Literary Association of Raleigh come to Britain in recognition of the Raleigh tercentenary in October. This might draw attention to future transatlantic commemoration, not least around the Plymouth's own special association, the *Mayflower* voyage. A positive experience in 1918 might pave the way for a fruitful celebration in 1920.⁵⁷

The visit by the mayor of Plymouth, Freedom of the City in hand, to the ambassador's London residence in September 1918 could only have ruffled feathers in Exeter. When Page suggested the Raleigh tercentenary would be a moment worthy of celebration, the day itself, 29 October, was barely a month away. Guided by Page's early hints and led by the indefatigable but oft-overlooked architect of internationalist commemorative and cultural events, Sir Israel Gollancz (1863–1930), London was already ahead of Devon.⁵⁸ There were plans for public services and a solemn moment of remembrance on the very spot where Sir Walter met his end on the scaffold in the grounds of the Tower of London. Devon was left with very little time to make preparations, and there was little chance of rivalling London. Nevertheless, the prominence of the *Mayflower* tercentenary in regional politics seems to have spurred swift action.

Exeter claimed priority by its geographical proximity to Hayes Barton, Raleigh's birthplace. Perhaps by design, there was significant overlap between the hastily organised Raleigh Tercentenary Committee, which first met at the end of September 1918, and the Committee for the Furtherance of University Education in the South-west. It included the mayors of Exeter and Plymouth, the fourth earl Fortescue, Lord Lieutenant of Devon, and Henry Lopes, Chairman of Devon County Council. Plans were in flux well into October, with meetings held at Exeter College and chaired by local historian Hugh R. Watkin.⁵⁹

The final programme was announced on 18 October 1918, with only ten days to go. Given how little time they allowed, the Exeter plans were impressive. The events were organised with public attendance in mind, 'so all patriotic Devonians can take their share in honouring the

⁵⁶ Hendrick, *Life and Letters*, p. 402.

⁵⁷ 'Freedom of Plymouth', *Western Daily Mercury*, 21 Sept. 1918. Many newspaper citations in this piece come from the scrapbook of James Rendel Harris, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre.

⁵⁸ Gollancz was also the prime mover behind the Shakespeare tercentenary of 1916. For his role and reputation: G. McMullan, 'Forgetting Israel Gollancz: the Shakespeare tercentenary, the National Theatre, and the effects of commemoration', in G. McMullan et al., *Antipodal Shakespeare*, pp. 29–61.

⁵⁹ 'Tercentenary in Devon', *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 4 Oct. 1918.

memory of one of Devon's greatest sons'.⁶⁰ This included talks from respected American and British professors, including Thomas Seccombe, then editor of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The Committee also arranged a special service in the city's cathedral, as well as formal transatlantic greetings to be exchanged by telegram. All of this would take place at the same time as celebrations in London, organised by Gollancz, who had followed the advice of Page and approached the North Carolina State Literary and Historical Association.⁶¹ For their part, the Association intended to hold a 'Conference on Anglo-American relations in Commemoration of the Tercentenary of Sir Walter Raleigh' and would be in communication with both London and Exeter.⁶²

This date was also another instalment in the local university skirmish. At the same time as the final programme was revealed, so too were suggestions for ways that the Raleigh commemoration could further the university agenda. The Mayflower University was not mentioned but the implications were clear, especially since the suggested links to university education gestured at an ambitious international, Anglo-American agenda. Suggestions included establishing a 'Colonial Chair' connected with Exeter College, which, if proposals to the Government were successful, would soon be granted University status, possibly even without the association of other western colleges. And, in a clear gesture towards America, another proposal was to establish a 'Raleigh Room' in the College, which would house a selection of 'Raleighana', that is, literary and other relics that had a bearing on the relationship between America and Devon. It is telling that this was not about Britain as a whole, but a direct local connection, the aim being to benefit the region, and even perhaps only Exeter itself. Another proposal, connected with the first, was to establish a Raleigh Lectureship in Navigation, an implicit challenge to an existing strength at Plymouth.⁶³

On 29 October, Exeter duly belatedly performed its role as the centre of Raleigh country and representative of Devon. The Raleigh tercentenary events were widely reported in the national press and few failed to mention that celebrations were taking place simultaneously in London and across the Atlantic.⁶⁴ Here there was something of a rub for the Devonshire effort. To the press outside the southwest, the Devon events merited little mention, even while the North Carolina party received and sent greetings

⁶⁰ 'Raleigh tercentenary; celebration day in Devon fixed', *Western Times*, 18 Oct. 1918.

⁶¹ As reported in R. D. W. Connor (ed.), *State Literary and Historical Association of North Carolina Proceedings*, (Raleigh, NC, 1919), p. 25.

⁶² The telegrams were exchanged with North Carolina's Literary and Historical Association, but the meeting in Raleigh did not take place due to the outbreak of Spanish influenza. The conference papers were compiled in the *Proceedings*, cited above. The story of North Carolina's tercentenary celebrations is admirably told in C. Moore, 'Sir Walter Raleigh, the "Most representative man of his time": Frederick Henry Koch's Raleigh Pageant of 1920', *North Carolina Historical Review*, 93 (2016), pp. 279–307.

⁶³ 'Raleigh tercentenary; celebration day in Devon fixed', *Western Times*, 18 Oct. 1918.

⁶⁴ 'The Raleigh tercentenary', *Liverpool Daily Post*, 29 Oct. 1918; 'Commemorating Raleigh', *Belfast News-Letter*, 28 Oct. 1918.

separately from and to London and Exeter. London wrote, 'Proud of our common heritage in Raleigh, we send paternal greetings', to which North Carolina responded: 'May Raleigh's memory be a perpetual bond between America and her glorious Mother Country'. Exeter wrote in rather more prosaic terms, saving on the expense of definite articles: 'Devonshire sends greetings on occasion of Raleigh Tercentenary'. While repeating the nationally inflected hope that America and the 'Mother Country' might forge a strong bond, the North Carolina Association's response was couched in diplomatically regional terms: 'North Carolina, the scene of Raleigh's colonies, greets his native Devonshire'.⁶⁵

The original programme for the American Raleigh celebration was fairly lavish by comparison, including a pageant and other large-scale festivities. However, the influenza pandemic meant that the entire public side of the event had to be delayed until 1920, which was ultimately serendipitous since it meant that Raleigh and the *Mayflower* could be celebrated together. The North Carolina Literary and Historical Association did produce papers, which were eventually published. But there was an evident contrast between the framing of the North Carolina celebrations and those in Devon. Cecilia Moore has shown that throughout the years 1918–20, Raleigh's American celebrants were keen to promote a white 'Anglo' version of North Carolina history. This was in light of the changing ethnic demographics of large parts of the country, which engendered a general sense that re-establishing the interconnectedness of America and Britain would shore up the shaky foundations of an Anglo-Saxon, white, Protestant, heritage.⁶⁶

By contrast, the high point of the Raleigh celebration in Britain illuminated the distinct nature of the commemoration in Devon, where the event became a pointed message to the region's educational factions. The centrepiece of a large public meeting at Exeter's hippodrome was the revelation of a letter received from Walter Peacock, Secretary to the Duchy of Cornwall, which owned land in Cornwall, Devon, and beyond. The letter declared that so universal a genius as Raleigh could only be fully and fairly commemorated by a complete and independent university. After all, Raleigh was as myriad-minded as Shakespeare: 'a scholar, courtier, soldier, historian, political philosopher and economist, lawyer, scientist and chemist, trader, and navigator' Raleigh had also decried the lack of education in his own day. Thus, Peacock suggested that the University of the South-west, once inaugurated, should be known as the Raleigh University. A committee was duly formed to raise funds for the bold idea, which all present agreed was very much 'in the Raleigh spirit'.⁶⁷ Thus Exeter's Raleigh event became another episode in the ongoing drama of regional educational politics.

⁶⁵ 'Anglo-American relations', in *Proceedings of the North Carolina Literary and Historical Society* (Raleigh, NC, 1919), pp. 25–8.

⁶⁶ Moore, 'Pageant'.

⁶⁷ 'Raleigh's memory, south-west university as memorial; project launched; support from Duchy of Cornwall', *Western Morning News*, 30 Oct. 1918.

But there was little scope for follow-up to the Raleigh idea, and no movement towards fostering the transatlantic links necessary for making such a university function as anything more than a rhetorical flourish. On the rather less sensational level of business as usual, 12 November 1918 was a more noteworthy day for higher education than 29 October. On that day, a deputation from the Committee for Furtherance of University Education in the South-west showed solidarity and presented a memorial to the Board of Education in support of the federated scheme. It was signed by over 1,600 representatives, persons and bodies, including ninety-one publicly elected councils and 250 individual labour organisations, the latter groups representing a large pool of potential students. The deputation that delivered the petition consisted of a mixture of civic and regional leaders, along with academics who, like Quiller-Couch, had connections to the southwest. The representatives came mostly from Cornwall and Devon, but also from Dorset and elsewhere in the west.⁶⁸

Yet despite this widespread support on the local and regional level, the response from the Minister of Education, H. A. L. Fisher, was not encouraging. Citing a dearth of students, a lack of funds, an inadequate supply of qualified teachers, and the incommensurate strengths of the four proposed federal colleges, Fisher and the Board felt unable to support the foundation of a university in the southwest. Instead, he recommended that the four constituent colleges do more to further their individual growth, not least in areas beyond their specialisms. Only the college at Exeter had any strength in the humanities or 'pure science', a key reason why many felt it should be the central college, but this was viewed by the Board of Education as a weakness in proposed federation.⁶⁹ Ultimately, although the region had extinguished any differences ignited by the brief furore over an Anglo-American university, in its dealings with the national Board of Education the expanded central state's priorities, and lack of funds, prevailed over local ambitions.⁷⁰

So no 'Raleigh University' appeared at Exeter, and Plymouth's Mayflower University fared no better. James Rendel Harris's idea died a somewhat more prolonged death, never having had to grapple with the grim realities of the Board of Education. Nevertheless, in January 1920, the *Mayflower* Council Chairman Melbourn Aubrey all but announced the scheme's demise. In one of his regular reports for the *Western Morning News* on the tercentenary preparations Aubrey admitted that an Anglo-American University at Plymouth was 'not easy of realization'. Rendel's estimated cost of 2 million pounds for the Mayflower University was a significant sum in the post-war financial and economic climate. The American attitude was that their money was better spent on modern institutions on their own shores. Being unable to match the antiquity of

⁶⁸ 'South-western university scheme', *Western Times*, 7 Nov. 1918.

⁶⁹ 'S.W. university; Mr. Fisher's reply to a deputation', *Western Times*, 4 Feb. 1919.

⁷⁰ J. Cronin, *The Politics of State Expansion: War, State, and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London 1991), pp. 29–30.

Oxford or Cambridge, it was by cultivating intellectual excellence in their own new educational establishments that the Americans could hope to compare and compete with the Old World. That said, Aubrey believed there might still be hope for an Anglo-American university in the long term and separate from the *Mayflower* celebrations.⁷¹ This was a false hope. But this news barely registered amidst the gleeful anticipation of celebrating the *Mayflower* in other, more prosaic ways in September 1920.

IV

Although neither scheme for a commemorative university in Devon came to fruition, both had a noteworthy afterlife as examples of educational legacies as commemorative activity. Educational legacies – lecture series, endowed professorial chairs, research fellowships – are underrepresented in scholarship on public history.⁷² Arguably this is because scholars familiar with heritage discourse are inclined to draw a rigid distinction between ‘public’ and ‘academic’ histories, the former encompassing monuments, memorials, preserved buildings and objects on display, which heritage academics pride themselves on holding up to critical scrutiny. Universities do not tend to be viewed as vehicles for public historical commemoration because of this accepted distinction between audiences for ‘public’ heritage distinct from ‘academic’ bodies.⁷³ However, as the Raleigh and *Mayflower* schemes suggest, new universities were conceived as existing primarily for the ‘public’ constructed on more or less inclusive, democratic lines – whether this was successful is another matter.⁷⁴ But as complex organisations, universities were viewed as uniquely appropriate commemorative symbols. Individual reputations like that of the polymath Raleigh or events of (perceived) international importance like the *Mayflower* voyage, with all its pregnant associations for future Anglo-American partnership in 1920 especially, were easily adapted to such elaborate schemes. Yet for all the goodwill that lay behind dreams of commemorative universities, less ambitious plans that fitted the remit of existing institutions and could attract generous benefactors were far more likely to succeed in the long term.

The *Mayflower* and Raleigh tercentenaries each separately gave rise to an intellectual legacy. In the case of Raleigh, it was the British Academy’s Raleigh Lecture, made possible by the generosity of Sir Charles Wakefield, formerly Lord Mayor of London. It was announced at a meeting of the British Academy Council in October 1918 that Wakefield had donated £500 a year for five years ‘at least as the nucleus of a fund for History

⁷¹ ‘Mayflower, the tercentenary celebration’, *Western Morning News*, 24 Jan. 1920.

⁷² The furore surrounding Cecil Rhodes in Oxford is no exception: the statue, not the fellowship, has come under fire in the last few years.

⁷³ Perhaps this helped further the belief in Britain that it lacks ‘public intellectuals’: S. Collini, *Absent Minds: Intellectuals in Britain* (Oxford, 2006), p. 3.

⁷⁴ B. Rogaly and B. Taylor, ‘For the likes of us? Retelling the classed production of a British university campus’, *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14 (2015), pp. 235–59.

to commemorate the Tercentenary of Sir Walter Raleigh, the Historian of the World, with the provision that one lecture should be delivered annually to be called "The Raleigh Lecture".⁷⁵ The Council thanked Wakefield for 'so liberal an endowment of historical research' that would 'serve to advance historical learning among our fellow subjects, but also to help forward intellectual co-operation between American and British scholars'. The Academy also took the opportunity to record and 'affirm its wish for co-operation with American scholars in the advancement of intellectual culture'.⁷⁶ A 'Raleigh House' was also proposed at the time – a London site for 'promoting the intellectual cooperation between British and American scholars', but this did not materialise.⁷⁷

What is most striking is how quickly the Anglo-Americanism that underpinned the Raleigh celebration, of which the lecture was the product, quickly transformed into internationalism once the lectures got underway. Although internationalism was of course an opportune theme for a lecture series in 1919, Raleigh was also a well-known 'historian of the world'. The first Raleigh Lecture, delivered by that inveterate giver of inaugural lectures, Viscount James Bryce, in October 1919, on 'World History', paid homage to Raleigh's most important contribution to English letters, his *History of the World* (1612). It was this identity, not his identity as 'the first American', that came to the fore. The lecture provided an opportunity to reflect publicly on the interconnectedness of recent history and the implications for the future, not least for the direction in which historical research must move, given contemporary circumstances: 'For the first time in the annals of our planet its inhabitants have become one whole, a community each and every part of which is affected by the fortunes of every other part'.⁷⁸ The Raleigh Lecture on History has now been given annually for over 100 years, and the lectures continue to take place in a universalising spirit in sympathy with Raleigh the world historian, despite the original Anglo-American intentions of the endowment.⁷⁹ The Raleigh Lectures have reflected their dedicatee's erudition, rather than the interests of any given present.

The *Mayflower* tercentenary also left a legacy suitable to the event it commemorated: the Watson Chair Lectures in American History, Literature, and Institutions. The endowment, from Sir George Watson, a dairy magnate, was administered through the Anglo-American Society and the Sulgrave Institution.

We thus start the year of the Mayflower Tercentenary with great encouragement and high hopes. ... But there is much other important

⁷⁵ Council Minutes, British Academy Minute Book (1918–24), 30 Oct. 1918.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ This had been reported in 'Raleigh tercentenary; a joint commemoration with America', *Westminster Gazette*, 30 Sept. 1918, but was not discussed in the Council until December. Council Minutes, British Academy Minute Book (1918–24), 11 Dec. 1918.

⁷⁸ Viscount Bryce, *World History* (London, 1919), p. 4.

⁷⁹ The British Academy website lists the last fifty of these annual lectures: <<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/lectures/raleigh-lectures-history>>.

work to be done: the provision of Research Fellowships to enable young British scholars to study the United States 'on the spot'; the establishment of a system of prizes for knowledge about America in the Secondary and Elementary Schools.⁸⁰

The Watson lecture fund was focused in its subject matter but broad in its potential audience. Rather than a single annual event, the endowment supported the delivery of a series of public lectures given in alternating years by a visiting lecturer from the United States and by a lecturer from Britain. Unlike the Raleigh Lecture, these were not confined to London. They took place at a number of Britain's universities.⁸¹ Early lecturers frequently made reference to the Watson Chair's specific aim of 'mutual comprehension' between Britain and America, demonstrating the direct link to the *Mayflower* tercentenary, and even to Page.⁸² A. F. Pollard, lecturing in 1924, noted that there was at that time no professorship in American history, and no specific programme of study in American subjects. This made the lecture a unique means of 'broadcast[ing] the seed of interest and understanding over as many centres of education as may be possible, in the hope that it may strike root, spring up, and bear fruit in the shape of professorships and departments of American history, literature, and economics'.⁸³ The Watson Chair was the first fall in a positive avalanche of fellowships, exchange schemes, and endowed chairs aimed at fostering the growth of American history in Britain. At first these were open only to Oxford and Cambridge students wishing to study at America's closest equivalents to the ancient universities: Yale, Princeton and Harvard.⁸⁴ This elitist focus shifted over the next ten years or so. In 1924, the benefactor of the English-Speaking Union Scholarship, Frances Riggs, sought to appoint a female graduate qualified to work in American history, who would be attached to the University of Michigan.⁸⁵ The Barnett Fellowship, advertised in 1931, was open to graduates of any British university but required its holder to 'reside for a certain time in an industrial community in Great Britain or the United States in such a manner as to ... familiarise him with the conditions of working class life'.⁸⁶

Meanwhile, the Commonwealth Fund established an American history professorship at the University of London, to which Hugh Hale Bellot was appointed in 1930.⁸⁷ In H. H. Bellot's day, the Watson Fund was

⁸⁰ *Anglo-American Newsletter and Sulgrave Bulletin*, no. 3, Jan. 1920: JRH1/1/6/26.

⁸¹ This included the colleges of London, Oxford and Cambridge, but also Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Edinburgh, Liverpool, St Andrews, Glasgow, Leeds, Nottingham and Bristol, all in the first four years, and on one occasion even at Mansion House.

⁸² A. T. Hadley, *Economic Problems of Democracy* (Cambridge, 1923).

⁸³ A. F. Pollard, *Factors in American History* (Cambridge, 1925).

⁸⁴ 'Universities in USA', *The Times*, 25 April 1923; H. H. Bellot papers, UCL MSS Add 204/A.

⁸⁵ International Federation of University Women to H. H. Bellot, 21 Jan. 1924: Bellot Papers, UCL, MSS Add 204/A.

⁸⁶ 'Barnett Fellowship', *The Times*, 22 Jan. 1931: Bellot Papers, UCL, MSS Add 204/A.

⁸⁷ Bellot went on to found the first Department of American History, housed at University College, London, although this was amalgamated into the history department sometime after 1967. Bellot

still under the auspices of the Sulgrave Manor Board, which had merged with the Anglo-American Society and was responsible for appointing lecturers.⁸⁸ These lecturers were not always academics – in 1931, they invited a congressman, James M. Beck – suggesting once again that the lectures fulfilled Page's wish for more conversation between different sectors of American and British society.⁸⁹ The Watson Lectures eventually came under the compass of Bellot's department, but they were presented annually until at least the 1970s.

V

This article has shown how seemingly uncontentious local historical commemorations had the potential to spark jealous reactions when permanent changes were mooted as part of the commemorative legacy, and particularly when these came with opportunities for future economic or cultural prosperity. Far from being just a provincial storm in a teacup, the debate that arose in Devon shows how international links caused the coming together of the contemporary enthusiasm for historical commemoration and the growing debate around access to higher education.

Raleigh and the *Mayflower* are just two examples, but they show how international dimensions could bolster existing discourses of local historical memory. Going beyond the binaries of local and national, elite and 'ordinary', the Raleigh and *Mayflower* tercentenaries show how difficult it can be to distinguish between a managed narrative of history and the genuine commitment from academics, local government and educators to improve educational provision along egalitarian lines. Thus, their aim in drawing local educational debate into commemorating Raleigh or the *Mayflower* was not to instil national identity in a cynical or opportunistic way, but to find wide, even international, approval for a new, modern infrastructure of higher education in Devon. This aim, so it emerged, went against the inclinations of the Board of Education.

Despite the failure of the localised schemes, the Raleigh Lectures and Watson Chair sustained the Anglo-American and international legacies of the tercentenaries from which they originated. Devon ceded these legacies, though reluctantly. Had the financial or government backing been there for either the *Mayflower* or the Raleigh scheme, matters may well have turned out rather differently. Nevertheless, even while the Devonian schemes did not come off, the Anglo-American relationship was solidified through the commemoration of 'shared' historical events.

himself gave the Watson Lectures in 1938 at the University of Birmingham. Watson Chair Lectures: Bellot Papers, UCL, MS Add 204/C.

⁸⁸ 'The Sulgrave Manor Board, Sole authority for the maintenance, care, and control, of Sulgrave Manor, and the administration of the "Watson Chair of American History, Literature, and Institutions": Bellot Papers, UCL, MS Add 204/6.

⁸⁹ S. J. Worsley, Academic Registrar to the Provost, UCL, 21 April 1931: Bellot papers, UCL, MS Add 204/F.

Page's idea of establishing mutual sympathy and communication through personal interaction had tangible effects in the presence of American visitors during the Raleigh and *Mayflower* years. American lecturers, preachers, politicians and tourists were much in evidence during the elaborate nationwide *Mayflower* celebrations of the summer and autumn of 1920.⁹⁰ Even Exeter's patched-together Raleigh event included a lecture from a J. W. Cunliffe, Professor of English Literature at Columbia University.

The Raleigh and *Mayflower* tercentenaries reveal the extent to which cultural understanding and education were understood to be consistent with memorialisation and commemorative activity, and particularly with the way academics were involved in those efforts. Regarding the George Watson Chair, HRH the Duke of Connaught said there was no more fitting memorial to the partnership of the two countries than 'an educational foundation' that would help in 'clearing away the ignorance and the resulting prejudice, which should be frankly recognised on both sides of the Atlantic ... the diplomatic relations between the two countries would enter upon a smoother path if the far-seeing efforts of the statesmen on both sides were aided instead of hampered by the man-in-the-street'.⁹¹ This was a sentiment widely shared, and yet there was little realistic possibility for this enthusiasm to be translated into either a *Mayflower* or a Raleigh university.

However, the debate about provincial higher education in the southwest, and the suitability of universities to represent local historical legacies or to embody international futures, suggests the complexity of relations between world and locality, and between education and commemoration. This complexity demands a more in-depth examination at the level of local bureaucracy and its relevance to international relations. Moreover, the case study here suggests that the divide between an educated elite and an undiscerning public is more apparent than real. Groups constituting a diversity of interests, civic and religious leaders, academics and other community representatives, imagined universities as open, public, democratic institutions, while international partnership was understood to be an avenue to local renewal. The example of the *Mayflower* and Raleigh tercentenaries suggests that the effort to find and propagate local pasts could be a powerful component in forging international relationships in an insecure and shifting geopolitical picture.

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⁹⁰ The extent of this activity is mapped at <http://humanities-research.exeter.ac.uk/voyagingthroughhistory/geolocation/map/browse?sort_field=Dublin+Core%2CTitle>.

⁹¹ *Sulgrave Bulletin*, Jan. 1920. Cutting in JRH 1/1/3/1.