

Published in:

***Childhoods in peace and conflict* [ISBN: 9783030747879] / edited by J. Marshall Beier, Jana Tabak (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).**

Chapter Four.

***“Children, Internationalism, and Armistice Commemoration in Britain, 1919-1939,”
Susannah Wright (Oxford Brookes University)***

Introduction

The front page of the League of Nations Union (LNU) *News Sheet* in November 1938 contains a striking photographic image of the national British armistice commemoration ceremony at the Cenotaph memorial in London (*LNU News Sheet*, November, 1938, 1). In black and white the Portland stone of Edwin Lutyen’s famous memorial appears vast and gleaming against the poppy wreaths and rows of smaller, darker figures. Many of those standing close to the memorial were royalty and state dignitaries from Britain and the wider Empire (or Commonwealth – both terms were popular at the time). Equally striking are the words around the image; above, “Twenty years on” (from the end of the First World War), and below, “Save the League and Save Peace”. An internationalist message and a sombre act of remembrance were presented to the reader as intertwined. This written and visual text shows a top-down invented tradition (Hobsbawm 1983). Commemorating the First World War in an appropriate way was intended as induction into a culture of responsible citizenship (King 1998, 195–97), and the hierarchies of class, race, gender and age embedded within British citizenship. Rituals could also be sites of resistance (Dirks 1994). The internationalist message conveyed here was one of a range of ‘acceptable’ narratives of remembrance (Gregory 1994). Yet the LNU saw fit to utilize the symbols and acts of commemoration for its ideological and propagandist purposes, and its message was not one which all contemporaries would have appreciated or agreed with.

I take this image as my starting point for thinking about internationalism and armistice commemoration in the interwar years. The words and picture convey LNU messages about the First World War that recur in many of that organization’s outputs throughout the interwar years. The saving the League strapline was informed, generally, by the difficult international climate of the late 1930s, and, specifically, the events of Autumn

1938 which saw European nations step back from the brink of another conflict, and provoked strident criticism of the League of Nations, and the LNU's lobbying position. Still, the message that it was important to remember and memorialize the First World War, with the purpose of bolstering the League of Nation's peace-making efforts to ensure that a conflict like that would never happen again, remained remarkably consistent throughout the interwar years.

Children and young people are entirely absent from this image, yet they were, in different ways and by different ideological constituencies, incorporated and enmeshed in narratives and acts of armistice commemoration. This chapter focuses on the ideological constituency of internationalists. How did they engage with children and childhood as part of their armistice-related activity, and how did children engage with them? This constitutes a hitherto under-explored dimension of the annual commemorative landscape of the interwar years. Particular attention is devoted to the liberal internationalism of the LNU, the largest internationalist voluntary association in Britain in the interwar years. Through annual Armistice Day messages for schoolchildren from the LNU, editorials and resources in teachers' periodicals, and through meetings, plays, and pageants held in drawing rooms, school halls, cinemas, and parks across Britain, liberal internationalists presented armistice commemoration as part of a much longer narrative of national history, which included the First World War (Bartie et al. 2017). Such a narrative also envisaged a future without the loss and suffering on a global scale of that conflict. Remembering the lives lost during the First World War would lead to a determination to avoid the same happening again and stimulate efforts – not just from statesmen but from individual citizens – to promote international understanding and peace.

Children were presented as central to this narrative, as it would be their idealism and efforts which would ensure international understanding and peace in the future. They were perceived as captive audiences for such messages. Yet attracting a younger generation was complex and, even for enthusiasts, challenging. Wider historical and ethical questions about the First World War and its legacy and war and peace had to be addressed with children as with adults. Engaging with children meant, also, navigating difficult territory related to the impact of children's age, and assumptions about agency and capacity which went with this. Children responded to these attempts to incorporate them in an internationalist understanding of commemoration in complex and varied ways. Their

responses were a force which, perhaps in subtle ways which can be difficult to trace in many of the extant primary sources, did something to shape the liberal internationalist agenda as it was experienced by these children and the adults around them. LNU texts portray children as the internationalists of the future (more than the present), but frequently neglect or skim over what children made of their involvement at the time. The occasional glimpses we have of children's own perspectives indicate that they were not passive vessels, but could in varied ways take on, amplify, modify, or sometimes resist, core liberal internationalist messages.

Internationalist remembering in the civic sphere

Commemoration of the First World War in interwar years Britain was a coming together, involving shared monuments, symbols, and rituals. It was also a site of contest, of ideological disputes and differences arising from individuals' varied experiences and memories of the conflict (Connelly [2002] 2015); Gregory 1994; King 1998; Noakes 2015; Todman [2005] 2013). The combination of collective remembrance and the potential for difference and discord was brought into focus each November around the time of the annual armistice commemoration. Narratives of remembrance in interwar years typically incorporated two strands. Firstly, members of the armed forces who died in the war were remembered and honoured. This was true also of the living who had served, but, importantly, to a markedly lesser extent. Veterans were accorded moral authority at this time (Noakes 2015). Yet there was ambivalence around their positioning at moments and sites of commemoration, perhaps because they made visible, in a discomfiting way, suffering after as well as during the war (c.f. Enloe 2019). The second strand was one of celebrating the coming of peace and hoping for the avoidance of a similar conflict. With these two narrative strands co-existing, both militarism and internationalism could be encoded in acts of commemoration. Varied constituencies, from the British Legion and other veterans groups, through to internationalists and pacifists, deemed it worthwhile to seize on the annual commemoration to energize their members and to promote their cause and their interpretation or interpretations of the First World War and its consequences. They might have emphasized the war dead or the coming of peace to greater or lesser degrees, but all found a way of presenting their take on remembrance which fell within a broadly acceptable range.

Internationalist perspectives, the focus of this chapter, were taken up by a range of contemporary British organizations; the largest of these was the LNU. The date of the LNU's foundation, November 1918, bound it symbolically to the end of the First World War, and the legacy of that conflict. With a paid-up membership which peaked at over 400,000 in 1931 the LNU became one of the largest voluntary associations in interwar years Britain and gained renown internationally as one of the most active of the League of Nations societies established in member states (McCarthy 2011, 4, Beales 1931, 322). Its goals were framed ambitiously: it would develop international understanding, while maintaining international order and liberating mankind from war (LNU 1926, 3). With headquarters in London and local branches nationwide, it aimed to promote the League of Nations through government lobbying and promotional activity among the general public. Vera Brittain wrote, who lectured for the LNU, recalled meeting "every social class from earls to dustmen, every shade of religious conviction from Roman Catholicism to Christian Science, and every type of political opinion from true-blue Diehard Toryism to blood-red Bolshevist Communism" (Brittain [1933] 1978, 565). Aiming at mass appeal, the LNU, alongside other contemporary organizations, experimented with developments in mass communication, harnessing new technologies like film and embracing commercial arrangements (c.f. Beers 2010). Despite some evidence of breadth of political appeal, LNU supporters were more likely than not to be liberal or labour in their politics (Birn 1981), and in terms of religious beliefs Christian, especially Nonconformist Christian (McCarthy 2011, 79–102). A challenging international climate by the mid-1930s, evidencing the limits of the League of Nations's collective security arrangements, has been mooted as the death-knell of support for the League of Nations and hope in what it could achieve, leading in turn to a decline in support for the LNU (Birn 1981). Yet efforts to communicate internationalist narratives to children, and to engage them as young activists and members of the LNU, continued till the eve of the Second World War (Elliott 1977; McCarthy 2011, 103–31; Wright 2017, 145–76; Wright 2020a). Given the difficulties of the late-1930s, looking to the future of internationalism through a younger generation was, potentially, an attractive strategy for the generation that lived through the First World War and supported the emergence of the League.

The LNU's particular version of internationalism – liberal internationalism – encouraged and enabled a wide basis of support. It called for nation states to work together but did not undermine the geopolitical structures of the nation state. Liberal

internationalism could co-exist with existing national and imperial loyalties, existing systems of governance, and existing systems of enforcement in national and imperial settings, including military ones (Clavin 2011; McCarthy 2011, 132–54). Even though a minority of individual members took the fully *pacifist* view that any armed conflict was wrong, the LNU as an organization was *pacifistic*. If the aim was to avoid war, it accepted the need for the military on the grounds that the processes of maintaining international order could potentially involve controlled use of military force (Ceadel 1980, 305). Liberal internationalism, importantly, was defined and championed by the victors of the First World War, and leadership was vested in a white male elite among them. No fundamental upheaval was posed to existing structures of political and diplomatic power, or racial, gender, and class loyalties. Other contemporaries – more socialist, more secularist, or connected with older pre-First World War peace movements – promoted a more radical vision of a world parliament run by people on the ground rather than existing governments (Beales 1931). The LNU, however, by fitting into existing ideological and political structures and issuing idealistic and moralistic appeals to an interconnected humanity, appeared to contemporaries as “high-minded and respectable” (Birn 1981, 4). With this respectability, the LNU’s internationalist message could be disseminated widely and extensively. It was promoted to pupils in school lessons, and to a wider public (which could include children) through the press, pamphlets, church sermons, and civic events, including those which took place on Armistice Day.

As early as 1919 the LNU latched on to armistice commemorations as a promotional opportunity: “To allow this memorable event to be recalled for the sole purpose of rejoicing over the victory by arms would be an unworthy use of the day” (*The League*, October, 1919, 5). Soon, this was not only about Armistice Day itself. A week or so of “intensive propaganda” came to be recognized as “one of the best methods of increasing support” for its objects (*Headway*, December, 1924, 238). Ideologically-focused goals of promoting peace, and recruitment-focused goals of seizing on a symbolically important moment in order to increase membership were combined: “It is by a campaign for our cause that we can best pay our debt to the dead” (*Headway*, October, 1926, 200). As well as bringing in new supporters, “armistictide” was deemed by the LNU significant for existing members. It was the time when they could “rededicate themselves to the carrying out of their essential task – the building of a better world order” (*Headway*, November, 1932, LNU News

Supplement, i). Local branches arranged mass meetings, participated in civic ceremonies and parades, organized League-themed armistice services, put on concerts and pageants. They placed displays in shop windows, set up recruitment stalls in marketplaces, and distributed leaflets. The most ambitious programmes were found in urban areas with very large branches, or multiple smaller branches that could combine their energies. The same broad message comes through in many of the texts that recorded or were produced for armistice-time activities. Those who died fighting in the First World War were to be remembered and honoured. But, in their name, it was vital to avoid future wars and secure peace, through support for the work of the League of Nations (which, in turn, would be achieved through supporting the work of the LNU).

Children and young people were frequently involved in this activity. They performed in front of audiences. In 1924 Buxton local branch organized a children's "Pageant of Unity and Peace" on 4 and 5 November in the town's opera house (*Headway*, December, 1924, 239). A "very impressive" tableau was put on in Aberdeen in 1932, with over 60 children, mainly Girl Guides. A key scene involved "the dipping of the flags of all nations in the League in remembrance of the sacrifice of the war, and then hoisting them again to signify the hope of the future in the youth of today" (*Headway*, December, 1932, LNU News Supplement, iii). This description suggests an embodied and visually striking informal learning about war and peace for the performers and those who saw them. It also suggests that although 'the youth of today' provided a pleasing visual spectacle in the 1930s, their main contribution to peacebuilding was deferred to the 'future'. Such a generationally grounded message of world citizenship projected forward in time was common in LNU texts (Wright 2020a). Alternatively, children could be the audience. They were invited to hear talks, gathered in their hundreds in large civic venues, or in smaller groups such as Sunday Schools (e.g. *Headway*, November, 1926, 218 and November, 1923, 458). They watched LNU-produced films; the LNU, along with other humanitarian agencies, was keen to experiment with the medium of film in order to reach mass audiences for educational and propaganda purposes (c.f. Tusan 2017). In Oxford in 1926 over 1240 children were invited on Armistice Day to a screening at the city's main cinema of the LNU's own film, *The Star of Hope*, which described the horrors and costs of the First World War (avoiding too much gory detail) and the creation of the League of Nations as a positive legacy (*Headway*, December, 1926, 238).

Children, moreover, were involved by their local LNU branches in larger civic Armistice Day commemorative events, often involving parades and war memorials. In 1933, to give one example, nearly 300 “Pioneers” – the LNU’s term for young members and supporters – processed to Blackpool’s cenotaph in 1933 (*League News*, February, 1934, 7). On such occasions, children, arguably, imitated the rituals and behaviours displayed by their elders, and were thereby inducted into a national – and local – collective memory and culture (c.f. Sánchez-Eppler 2013). For the LNU, the same processes were harnessed in order to induct children into, and thereby to preserve and ensure the future continuity of, local and national communities of internationalists too. Processes of inducting children by remembering the past were focused on creating an internationalist child (which had affinities with the ‘world-child’ of the later 20th century that Jana Tabak (2020) describes). The internationalist child of the interwar years would, it was hoped, act as an adult to preserve internationalist communities in the future.

Internationalist remembering in schools

It was, however, in schools, where children were required to spend so much of their time together, and were prepared for political subjecthood in the future, that much armistice commemoration activity with an internationalist focus involving children took place. Activities were encouraged by local LNU branches, with Ealing Branch arranging for speakers to visit local schools and writing to teachers to encourage them to celebrate “League Weeks” around armistice time (LNU: Ealing Branch, 1924, 1929). Beyond such local provision, teachers looking for an internationalist slant on armistice commemoration could find in educational periodicals a wealth of talks, prayers, lessons, and essays. A “Peace Service for Armistice Day” and a “Peace Prayer for Children” (the latter by the popular children’s author Enid Blyton) were typical fare (*Teachers World*, October 26, 1932, 128 and November 9, 1932, 205). Several Local Education Authorities (LEAs) issued guidance for schools, calling on them to emphasize internationalism and peace when they celebrated the armistice (e.g. LNU, Minutes of the Education Committee, October 30, 1925 and November 27, 1925; *Times Educational Supplement*, October 13, 1934, 205). It is often not possible to identify the LNU in this material as author or originator, though this does not preclude authors or LEA officials being members or sympathizers. This, in itself, demonstrates how prevalent internationalist narratives of the armistice became in schools, as they did in the

wider public sphere in the interwar years (Gregory 1994). Revealingly, the inspectors who gathered information for a Board of Education report on “League of Nations teaching” in schools noted that the armistice was observed through communal events with a stress on “the need for international goodwill ... uniformly”. Such events were deemed “impressive occasions” when pupils were “particularly receptive to emotional rather than intellectual influences”; they had the potential to be powerful fora for informal learning (Board of Education, 1932, 9).

Armistice ceremonies with an internationalist flavour seem to have been a recognizable and common feature of the contemporary commemorative landscape. The distinctive components of an internationalist armistice-time message become evident when compared with a wider selection of armistice-time messages targeted at children. A “Service for Remembrance Day”, for example, recommended a headteachers’ address which would cover the years of the First World War and the sacrifices made, the significance of the silence, the unknown warrior, war poem and Bible readings, prayers, hymns, an explanation of what was expected from children, and (mainly in secondary schools) the roll of honour recording the names of ex-pupils and teachers who lost their lives (*Teachers’ World*, October 22, 1930, 169). British Legion adverts, which appeared most years in the educational press, emphasized poppies as a means of providing money for war veterans and remembering those who lost their lives in war (*Teachers’ World*, October 28, 1931, 125). Internationalist texts aimed at schools often included the same ceremonial and ritualistic elements, and similar messages about sacrifice and loss. In addition, as will become clear below, children were encouraged to work for peace too, and to strive for future disputes being settled not through war but arbitration and the League of Nations.

The glut of content in the educational press suggests an appetite among teachers for material with an internationalist flavour to support them in running such events. The LNU also reported considerable demand. From 1919 it issued pamphlets, programmes of Armistice Day celebrations, and copy for educational periodicals (*The League*, December, 1919, 41; LNU, Minutes of the Education Committee, November 26, 1920 and November 21, 1924). From 1929 till 1939 it issued an annual Armistice Day message; a shorter, simpler, message was also produced in some years for younger pupils. Messages, the LNU suggested, could be read out during the school’s Armistice Day commemorative event, and placed on noticeboards afterwards (*Journal of Education*, November, 1933, 721). Notwithstanding the

dominance of women among the LNU's members and supporters (McCarthy 2011, 182–211), those invited to pen these messages were all men. The first three were authored by leading figures in the LNU itself. The Headmasters of two leading public schools, Rugby and Harrow, contributed messages in 1932 and 1933.¹ From 1934 to 1937 the gravity of the international situation was felt to demand messages from high-ranking statesmen and politicians. 1938's message was written by the Archbishop of York.

LNU Armistice Day messages could reference the events and concerns of the moment. Cyril Norwood, headmaster of Harrow in 1933, expressed his hope for a disarmament treaty, whilst the Archbishop of York in 1938 commented on the events of September that year which brought nations “to the very brink of the pit of war” (*League of Nations Union News Sheet*, November, 1933, 3; *The Schoolmaster*, November 3, 1938, 655). Some messages were pitched at the level of principles and generalities. General Smut (South African prime minister and international statesman) in 1937 called, in somewhat abstract terms, for “Youth to concentrate its enthusiasm and energy on this task of fundamental reconstruction” to secure a “better world for the future” (*The Schoolmaster*, November 11, 1937, 826). The Archbishop of York in 1938, instead, offered concrete suggestions, encouraging young readers and individuals to act in order “to increase good will and to establish peace”. He recommended that they learn history with a determination to understand the position of enemies in conflicts, and that they travel overseas if able to, meeting with locals and not just spending time with English friends. He suggested that they show kindness to refugees and other recent immigrants from other nations who lived in their neighbourhoods and who might feel lonely and lost: “you will come to understand their point of view and feel more sympathy for it” (*The Schoolmaster*, November 3, 1938, 655).

Notwithstanding these variations in reference points and tone, what is perhaps more striking is the way in which three, interconnected arguments appeared in some form in all the messages. First, the young people addressed were encouraged to remember and honour those who had lost their lives, or suffered injuries, in the First World War. Second, the founding of the League of Nations was presented as a result of the War. In this view, preventing another war through working for the success of the League in preserving peace was the most appropriate way to show gratitude to those who had fought and to honour the memories of those who had died. Third, it was the responsibility of the younger

generation to promote and sustain the League to ensure that the legacy of peace that those who fought in the war had desired would be achieved. They were to be the keepers of an internationalist inheritance, those who would preserve it in the future; this dynamic has been noted already in relation to locally organized armistice events. As Gilbert Murray wrote in 1931, “we have founded it ... it is for you to keep it alive and make it stronger, till at last the nations really know that they are members of the whole and one of another” (*The Schoolmaster*, November 5, 1931, 682). And maintaining and promoting such an inheritance, Hugh Lyon, headmaster of Rugby, suggested the following year, was the “finest tribute” that could be paid to those who died in the First World War. For young people to preserve peace would require “the ... courage and constancy” that their fathers demonstrated on the battlefield (LNU 1932). Tropes of legacy and emulation of war heroes common in contemporary armistice texts (Connelly [2002] 2015; Wright 2020b) were tied to an internationalist purpose.

The LNU often reported success through numbers: of Armistice Day letters distributed, of armistice-time meetings, of new members who joined through recruitment activities, of people at events. It is more difficult in most LNU texts to ascertain the meanings ascribed both by those trying to engage children, and the children who read or heard messages, listened to talks, watched pageants and films, or processed to memorials, themselves. Oblique insights can be gleaned through references from teachers and in LNU records and publications into what the adults involved, at least, wanted to achieve. They aimed for something appropriate for children’s age and understanding, and which was of interest and relevant to them; the latter exercised minds increasingly as the years passed and the First World War itself became an increasingly distant memory. In his 1935 Armistice Day message (LNU 1935), Samuel Hoare (Foreign Secretary at the time) noted that the 17 years since the first Armistice Day covered the whole lives of most of the young people to whom he was writing. The generation which suffered during the war years and set up the League of Nations, it was noted in 1929, were now passing and it was up to children to take their agenda forwards and develop the “League of the future” (*Headway*, November, 1929, LNU News Supplement, i). Children’s key contribution here was, as noted earlier, envisaged not in the present but in the future once they possessed adult capacities and capabilities.

Reading through the Armistice Day messages together, it seems that an older generation was grasping for a way to communicate a suitably internationalist message in a

manner which would engage young listeners and readers. And the authors of these messages after 1934 were not all educators by profession, with some picked because of their prominent position in public life instead. Their contributions, undoubtedly, had the potential to be a highly influential and powerful pedagogical instrument. Notwithstanding this, the LNU documented in some years a “mixed response” from teachers (e.g. LNU, Minutes of the Education Committee, December 14, 1936). In part this seems to have been about difficulties in finding the right register or pitch for children, not easy when different ages were together in a whole school gathering. Most teachers responding to an LNU survey in 1936 deemed the Armistice Day messages suitable for the occasion, but for a minority they were not understood by younger children, not exciting or challenging enough for older ones, or not “constructive” enough (LNU, Minutes of the Junior Branches Sub-Committee, December 8, 1936). Whether these concerns were about knowledge and understanding, concepts, tone, or the ideological message and/or lack of practical suggestions (either of which the latter comment about being constructive might imply), is not clear.

The challenges that teachers alluded to did not stop at least some members of school-based junior branches engaged with armistice-time activity with enthusiasm and energy. In a manner parallel to adult branches, the days and weeks around 11 November could be a time of intensive effort. Notably, this remained the case for junior branches well into the 1930s when adult branches’ armistice-time endeavours appear to have waned (according to the crude barometer of the reporting of events in LNU periodicals). Junior branches campaigned, as did local adult branches, to sign up new members. The Junior Branch of Ilford County High School for Boys deemed “a campaign for new members ... the best way of keeping Armistice Day”. Others, like Leighton Park School in Reading, engaged in house-to-house canvassing to recruit for the local adult branch (*League News*, February, 1933, 8). Armistice-time was also deemed a symbolically important occasion for activism within the school community. The junior branch at Central Foundation Girls’ School, for example, launched an “anti-war campaign” with “addresses to the school” on the afternoon before Armistice Day in 1933, followed by a debate on the need to abolish armaments on 14 November (*Central Foundation Girls’ School Magazine*, February, 1934, 12–13).

School magazines and LNU periodicals are replete with examples, in the days before and after 11 November if not on 11 November itself, of debates, large meetings with external speakers, and a range of performances and exhibitions – plays, concerts, pageants,

model assemblies, mock trials, poster displays. Some of these activities were aimed mainly at junior branch members but many included the wider school community and sometimes outside visitors too. Through rousing speeches, drama, music, re-enactment, young LNU supporters aimed to attract attention, and provide a personally persuasive or intellectually and emotionally meaningful experience for an audience who, at armistice time, would be particularly alert and receptive to messages about war and peace, including the LNU's liberal-internationalist messages (c.f. McCarthy 2010). Descriptions of these events suggest exhortation and even idealism, but also, on occasion input which challenged some of the policies and activities of the League. Bradfield College's junior branch activities on 11 November 1934, for example, involved the reading out of the LNU's Armistice Day message, described as a call to support the League, and a talk on naval armaments by a visiting speaker, who challenged the arguments of many League activists about the desirability and practicality of disarmament at least in the naval sphere (*Bradfield College Chronicle*, December, 1934, 1540–41). While the LNU's texts or services and talks for teachers published in the educational press did not shy away entirely from difficulties, they were frequently positive and idealistic. Accounts of localized activity suggest that some armistice-time events allowed for questioning and critique too.

Those who wrote in school magazines were typically junior branch secretaries or other committee members. They were the enthusiasts. We could question whether their enthusiasm was shared by all who encountered internationalist messages at armistice time in schools. Teacher and pupil accounts of what happened in the morning of 11 November 1937 submitted to Mass Observation, the social research organization founded earlier that year, offer a wider range of responses. Accounts reference narratives which were internationalist, militaristic, or somewhere in between, suggesting a difficult ideological balancing act between motifs of militarism and patriotism and internationalism and peace. One pupil for example wrote of an officer training corps parade, and prayers for the King, leaders, peace and the League of Nations (Mass Observation Archive (MOA) 1937, Day Survey Respondent (DSR) 225). The Mass Observation accounts describe highly charged communal events, perhaps echoing the Board of Education's reference to the power of emotional influences a few years earlier. But responses to the ideological narratives conveyed, or the emotive charge of events, were far from uniform. In submissions from both teachers and pupils, children were neither passive recipients of messages nor vessels

for cultural transmission. They could comply with cultural traditions and norms, they could enact minor, typically unobtrusive acts of rebellion, or they could simply ignore what they were presented with (Wright 2020b).

Multiple accounts, from teachers and pupils, refer to the reading out of General Smut's Armistice Day message for the LNU, and all in negative terms. The language was too difficult, it was too pompous, it was war-mongering (MOA 1937, DSR 225, 385, 520). One teacher described it as "a meaningless mixture of diluted economics and League of Nations propaganda" and observed that pupils were bored and stopped listening. Another noted in the margin of his account the headteacher's lack of sympathy with the League, suggesting that problems with tone and content were exacerbated by a lack of sincerity from the person reading the message (MOA 1937, DSR 308, 385). Other accounts, however, report enthusiastic attempts by those organizing or speaking at commemorative events to use these events as an opportunity to discuss and promote the League of Nations or, more broadly, a message of international understanding and peace (e.g. DSR 112, 113, 188). One teacher read to her class a winning entry to an LNU essay competition. She thought the essay very good, and better than the entry she herself had submitted, but despite attempts to simplify it was too complicated and went "above" her pupils' heads (DSR 102). Mass Observation accounts highlight the challenges of getting the right register and tone, and ensuring relevance and interest, noted in other years. Whilst additional challenges posed by the backdrop of the events of 1937, for some, made hopes of avoiding future war seem futile, others 'kept the faith' (Wright 2020b).

Conclusion

Internationalist – and specifically liberal internationalist – approaches to remembrance at armistice time were prominent throughout the interwar years. This chapter has shown that such approaches involved and engaged children. A younger generation, like their elders, honoured those who died or were injured fighting in the First World War, and, in order to remember and honour them, were called on to work for a future of international understanding and peace. Thousands of children in schools and civic venues throughout country heard messages and speeches, joined parades, took part in or watched plays and pageants, saw films, or canvassed for more LNU adult or junior branch members. LNU publications and the converts to the cause among pupils and teachers who

wrote in school magazines present such activity as popular and undertaken with enthusiasm. The positivity in such accounts, however, belies the challenges inherent in presenting a message which, if not radical or controversial, had a different emphasis from other contemporary messages which emphasized to a greater extent the glories of military sacrifice and the heroism of war. It also belies the unease which even enthusiastic contemporaries expressed about making such activity appropriate and relevant for a generation not directly involved in the First World War. Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan (1999, 31) note the potential for reassessment of approaches to commemoration over time as veterans and survivors are joined and eventually replaced by a successor generation who might want to act as trustees but might also wish to reassess the War's legacy and their own relation to it. Such reassessments could create tensions. All this applied to internationalist readings of the armistice, and the activity during the weeks around Armistice Day as well as the rituals of Armistice Day itself. And it is likely to have been felt particularly keenly when the focus of attention was on young people and how they could and should be involved in remembering the First World War and defining its legacy.

Children were for liberal internationalists the hope for the future (c.f. King 2016), the key to the achievement of their aims of peace and cooperation in the long term. Armistice commemoration was conceived as "an initiation into national history" for children (*Times Educational Supplement*, November 17, 1934, Home and Classroom Section). For liberal internationalists the history that children were to be initiated into incorporated, as a legacy of the First World War, campaigns to avoid a repeat of this conflict. If these were fundamentally adult interpretations and concerns, children's perspectives, needs, and concerns were still important to adults involved. And children could engage proactively and enthusiastically with the cause. Texts from the LNU headquarters and penned by adult and junior members offer many examples of leadership, enthusiasm, and initiative from young internationalists. Mass Observation accounts on the other hand provide examples of ennui and resistance too. Agentic responses – gleaned obliquely from adult-authored or, occasionally, from child-authored texts – were far from uniform (c.f. Gleason 2016).

By the time the commemorative period of November 1939 came around, the Second World War was underway. The LNU's hopes expressed the previous year of saving peace had not been fulfilled (*LNU News Sheet*, November, 1938, 1). Still, Gilbert Murray penned a final Armistice Day message (LNU 1939). This was issued with a poignant comment

acknowledging disruption to children's, and teachers', lives; it was noted that evacuation might prevent whole school assemblies, and teachers were therefore encouraged to use the message to prepare their own talks for their classes instead. Even if the scale and emotive power of events of previous years could not be replicated, internationalist messages at armistice-time were still deemed appropriate and desirable for children. LNU supporters continued to prepare for and promote a future – if not a present – of understanding and peace, and children remained central to these hopes.

Notes

¹ Public schools in the British context refers to elite, often long-established, fee-paying schools.

References

- Bartie, Angela et al. 2017. "‘And Those Who Live, How Shall I Tell their Fame?’ Historical Pageants, Collective Remembrance and the First World War, 1919–39." *Historical Research* 90 (249): 636–61.
- Beales, A.C.F. 1931. *The History of Peace*. London: G. Bell & Sons Ltd.
- Beers, Laura. 2010. *Your Britain. Media and the Making of the Labour Party*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Birn, Donald. 1981. *The League of Nations Union, 1918–1945*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Board of Education. 1932. *Report on the Instruction of the Young in the Aims and Achievements of the League of Nations*. London: HMSO.
- Brittain, Vera. (1933) 1978. *Testament of Youth. An Autobiographical Study of the Years 1900–1925*. Reprint, London: Virago.
- Ceadel, Martin. 1981. *Pacifism in Britain 1914–1945*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Clavin, Patricia. 2011. "Introduction: Conceptualizing Internationalism between the World Wars." In *Internationalism Reconfigured*, edited by Daniel Laqua, 1–14. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.
- Connelly, Mark (2002) 2015. *The Great War, Memory and Ritual*. Reprint, Woodbridge: Boydell Press.

Dirks, Nicholas B. 1994. "Ritual and Resistance: Subversion as a Social Fact." In *Culture/Power/History. A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory*, edited by Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley and Sherry B. Ortner, 483–503. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Elliott, B.J. 1977. "The League of Nations Union and History Teaching in England: A Study in Benevolent Bias." *History of Education* 6 (2): 131–41.

Enloe, Cynthia. 2019. "Wounds: Militarized Nursing, Feminist Curiosity, and Unending War." *International Relations* 33 (3): 393–412.

Gleason, Mona. 2016. "Avoiding the Agency Trap. Caveats for Historians of Children, Youth, and Education." *History of Education* 45 (4): 446–59.

Gregory, Adrian. 1994. *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919–1946*. London: Bloomsbury.

Hobsbawm, Eric. 1983. "Introduction." In *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1–14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

King, Alex. 1998. *Memorials of the Great War in Britain*. London: Bloomsbury, 1998.

King, Laura. 2016. "Future Citizens: Cultural and Political Conceptions of Children in Britain, 1930s–1950s." *Twentieth Century British History* 27 (3): 389–411.

League of Nations Union (LNU). 1926. *Annual Report for 1925*, London: LNU.

LNU. 1932. Armistice Day Message by Hugh Lyon. Misc 1932 O3. Archive of Manchester High School for Girls.

LNU. 1935. Armistice Day Message by Samuel Hoare. Box 29, League of Nations Union, Birmingham County Council Education Department Files, Birmingham Archives.

LNU. 1939. Letter to Local Education Authorities about Armistice Day. November 3. Box 29, League of Nations Union, Birmingham County Council Education Department Files, Birmingham Archives.

LNU. 1919–1939. Minutes of the Education Committee, LNU/5/23–28, Records of the League of Nations (LNU), British Library of Political and Economic Science (BLPES).

LNU. 1931–1939. Minutes of the Junior Branches Sub-Committee, LNU/5/40–42, Records of the LNU, BLPES.

LNU: Ealing Branch. 1924. Annual Report. Accession 48 Item 1. Records of the Ealing Branch of the League of Nations Union, Ealing Local Studies Centre.

LNU: Ealing Branch. 1929–1930. Minute Book No. 2: Publicity Committee Meetings, Accession 48 Item 3. Records of the Ealing Branch of the League of Nations Union, Ealing Local Studies Centre.

McCarthy, Helen. 2010. "The League of Nations, Public Ritual and National Identity in Britain, c. 1919–1956." *History Workshop Journal* 70: 108–32.

McCarthy, Helen. 2011. *The British People and the League of Nations*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Mass Observation Archive (MOA) (1937), Day Surveys, November 11, 1937: <http://www.massobservation.amdigital.co.uk.oxfordbrookes.idm.oclc.org>.

Noakes, Lucy. 2015. "A Broken Silence? Mass Observation, Armistice Day and 'Everyday Life' in Britain 1937–1941." *Journal of European Studies* 45 (4): 331–46.

Sánchez-Eppler, Karen. 2013. "In the Archives of Childhood." In *The Children's Table*, edited by Anna Mae Duane, 213–38. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Tabak, Jana. 2020. *The Child and the World: Child-Soldiers and the Claim for Progress*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Todman, Dan. (2005) 2013. *The Great War, Myth and Memory*. Reprint, London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Tusan, Michelle. 2017. "Genocide, Famine and Refugees on Film: Humanitarianism and the First World War." *Past and Present* 237 (1): 197–235.

Winter, Jay and Sivan, Emmanuel. 1999. "Setting the Framework." In *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Jay Winter and Emmanuel Sivan, 6–39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wright, Susannah. 2017. *Morality and Citizenship in English Schools: Secular Approaches 1897–1944*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Wright, Susannah. 2020a. "Creating Liberal-Internationalist World Citizens: League of Nations Union Junior Branches in English Secondary Schools, 1919–1939." *Paedagogica Historica* 56 (3): 321–40.

Wright, Susannah. 2020b. "War and Peace: Armistice Observance in British Schools in 1937." *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 13 (3): 426–45.