

Crisis Management, Reinvention and Resilience in
Museums: The Imperial War Museum During the
Second World War Era, 1933-1950

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Abstract and Keywords

This thesis is about museums and crisis. Through research on the Imperial War Museum, known today as IWM, during the Second World War era, 1933-1950, it reveals how crises disrupt museums, and the contrasting defensive and revolutionary strategies which museums must adopt when mitigating crisis situations. The thesis is situated in a small but emergent literature concerning museums and crisis. Existing work comprises contemporary case studies on difficult museum experiences, predominantly financial difficulty, wherein crisis has been applied to describe an institution's general state of organisational malaise. This thesis, by contrast, is innovative in that it comprises a historical case study on a museum facing wholesale physical and ideological collapse, and deploys newly developed crisis concepts to analyse different critical situations that can impact museums and to analyse the pathology underlying them. It draws on methodology informed by various case study, archival and historical theorists, and is produced using data extracted principally from documentary sources researched at the IWM museum archive and The National Archives.

Through investigating the experience of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era, this thesis finds that museums can be harmed by two crisis types. The first comprises a surface-defensive crisis, where the impacted museum must rebut the crisis effects. This type was conceived through considering the impact of the wartime aerial attacks against London on the Imperial War Museum. The second type comprises a deep-revolutionary crisis, where the museum must transition from its existing crisis-ridden state to some new, more sustainable paradigm. This type was conceived through considering the threats posed by cultural irrelevancy, perceived during the war, against the Imperial War Museum after the conflict. Delivered via an original synthesis of historical, museological and crisis research, the outcome of these findings comprises a novel understanding of crisis in the museum context.

Museums; Crisis; Crisis Management; Resilience; Reinvention

Author Biography

Philip W. Deans has a diverse background which continues to inform his work. He completed an undergraduate degree in Performing Arts at Canterbury Christ Church University over 2008-2011, a postgraduate degree in Military History at the University of Chester over 2011-2012, and a postgraduate degree in Museum Studies at Newcastle University over 2013-2014. Following a hiatus from studying, he commenced doctoral research at Newcastle University in 2015. Since completing his undergraduate degree, Philip has worked for a number of organisations. These include the UK National Committee of the Blue Shield, the Museums and Galleries History Group and IWM. In 2019, he was made a Lecturer in Museum, Gallery and Heritage Studies at Newcastle University.

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If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.

– Isaac Newton, 1675

Natural Philosopher and Mathematician

Trinity College, Cambridge

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Away from the university, this project would have been impossible to accomplish were it not for the support received by archival staff at IWM and The National Archives. Being historically framed, the following study relied on me consulting many and varied documentary sources. A review of my data folders reveals that at IWM alone, I consulted more than 850 accessioned folders, totalling in excess of 1500 individual documents. Each requested folder needed to be found, prepped for consultation, and delivered to the reading room by the archival staff. I am aware that they gave up considerable time and effort from their busy schedules and am incredibly thankful for their efforts in assisting me. I am particularly thankful to Sarah Henning, archivist at IWM, who bore the brunt of this work, apparently without batting an eyelid!

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Philip W. Deans
Newcastle upon Tyne

To my family

In recognition of Leslie Ripley Bradley

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been completed entirely and exclusively by myself, and that all incorporated quotations and sources used herein have been appropriately attributed to their rightful creator/s. I also declare that, at time of submission, the stated work has not been previously published in any outlet, nor submitted towards any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P. Deans". The letters are cursive and somewhat slanted to the right.

Philip W. Deans

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Abbreviations

ed	edited
ed.	editor
eds	editors
et al.	et alia [and others]
HMS	His/Her Majesty's Ship
HMSO	His/Her Majesty's Stationary Office
ibid.	ibidem [in the same place]
ICOM	International Council of Museums
IWM	Imperial War Museum/s
MA	Museum Archive
NB	Nota Bene [Note Well]
n.y.	no year
p.	page
pp.	pages
s.l.	sine loco [without place]
s.n.	sine nomine [without name]
TNA	The National Archives
V-weapon	vengeance weapon

Chapter 1 Introduction

The [Imperial War] Museum's continued and increasing popularity – especially when much lighter museums and heritage sites are on offer elsewhere in the capital and beyond – has always relied upon the organisation's ability and willingness to change.

– James Taylor, 2009

Head of Research and Information

Imperial War Museum

1.1 Chapter Introduction

This thesis is about crisis and museums. Specifically, it explores how crises disrupt museums, and the contrasting defensive and revolutionary strategies which museums must adopt when mitigating 'crisis situations'. The investigation is undertaken via a historical study of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era, 1933-1950, with particular emphasis on the war years themselves, 1939-1945. Accordingly, I answer the following central question: what does a historical study of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era reveal about the ways in which crisis can impact on museums and museums can respond to crisis? To help formulate an answer for this central question, I pursued six research aims, each with their own corresponding objectives. The first two aims and objectives contextualise the study. The third through sixth aims and objectives address the central question.

- I. Critique extant literature on the history of the Imperial War Museum during the early- and mid-twentieth century to establish its museological and historical focus and consideration for the Second World War.

- i. Ascertain the issues and ideas addressed by the authors.
 - ii. Assess the authors' consideration of the Second World War.
 - iii. Determine the prevailing analyses of, and recognition afforded to, the effects of the Second World War on the Imperial War Museum.

- II. Critique extant literature on the concept of crisis with particular regard for museums to establish the extent that museums have been considered in studies on crisis and crisis has been considered in studies on museums.
 - i. Ascertain the issues and ideas addressed by the authors.
 - ii. Assess the consideration of museums in literature by crisis scholars, and the consideration of crisis in literature by museum scholars.
 - iii. Determine the prevailing analyses of, and recognition afforded to, the effects of crisis on museums and response of museums to crisis.

- III. Identify difficulties which the Imperial War Museum faced over the years 1933-1950, with particular emphasis on 1939-1946, to ascertain the effects that the Second World War caused it, plus the museum's response.
 - i. Critically delineate the work of the Imperial War Museum to maintain a civic service during the Second World War.
 - ii. Critically delineate the work of the Imperial War Museum to protect its collection, building and staff from aerial attacks on London during the Second World War.
 - iii. Critically delineate the work of the Imperial War Museum to ensure its long-term continuance after the Second World War.

- IV. Assess the components that constitute a crisis to differentiate crisis situations at the Imperial War Museum from non-crisis situations.
 - i. Ascertain what literature on the concept of crisis states to be the theoretical and practical requirements for a crisis situation.

- ii. Contrast bona fide crisis situations with other forms of challenging situations which do not possess sufficient crisis components.
 - iii. Distinguish between the crisis-conducive situations faced by the Imperial War Museum and its non-crisis situations.

- V. Gauge how crisis impacted the Imperial War Museum to determine the ramifications that museums can experience when confronting crisis.
 - i. Ascertain what literature on the concept of crisis states to be the differing characteristics exhibited by different kinds of crisis.
 - ii. Identify the kinds of crisis-conducive situations faced by the Imperial War Museum, and determine if their impact conformed to the effects previously theorised for different the kinds of crisis.
 - iii. Assess the effects of these different kinds of crisis on museums.

- VI. Gauge how the Imperial War Museum responded to crisis to conceive cogent strategies with which crises can be managed by museums.
 - i. Ascertain what literature on the concept of crisis states to be the necessary resolutions to different kinds of crisis.
 - ii. Translate these resolutions into crisis management strategies.
 - iii. Identify the crisis management strategies engaged by the Imperial War Museum to resolve the crises it faced, and determine if these crisis management strategies conformed to the crisis management strategies previously theorised for the different kinds of crisis.

1.2 Situating the Thesis

The museum considered over the coming chapters is the national museum of the United Kingdom on war and armed conflict. Until now, the history concerning this museum during the Second World War has been under-represented in academic study. The extant historiography comprises only a few works which briefly consider the subject. This is surprising as 1939-1945 were years wherein

the museum assumed an alternative paradigm with subsequent, lasting consequences. Conceived as the National War Museum at the height of the First World War, it eventually opened in 1920. This occurred after the organisers replaced the word ‘National’ with ‘Imperial’, establishing the museum as the Imperial War Museum. In 2011, the museum underwent another renaming from Imperial War Museum to IWM: an acronym for Imperial War Museums (IWM 2011a: p. 1). That decision acknowledged its now multi-sited nature, as between 1969 and 2002, the museum acquired four additional satellite sites.

At present, IWM comprises five museums and heritage attractions. Through these, it aspires to be ‘a global authority on conflict and its impact on people’s lives’, and ‘a leader in developing and communicating a deeper understanding of the causes, course and consequences of war’ (IWM 2020: p. 4) involving the United Kingdom, British Empire and the Commonwealth since 1914 (Jaeger 2020: p. 227). The oldest site is IWM London, Southwark, its primary museum on war and armed conflict (IWM n.y.a). The second major site is IWM Duxford, south Cambridgeshire, an aviation-orientated museum and preserved First World War, Second World War and Cold War military airfield (IWM n.y.b). This site also serves as the museum’s large object store, enabling the collection of aircraft, vehicles and other large and heavy *matériel* for which the museum has become famous (Cornish 2012: p. 161). The third major site is IWM North, Salford, an audio-visual-heavy museum and interpretation centre (IWM n.y.c). Alongside these main sites are two other London-based heritage attractions. They are the Churchill War Rooms, City of Westminster, comprising the preserved Second World War Cabinet War Rooms and Churchill Museum (IWM n.y.d); and HMS *Belfast*, moored in the Pool of London on the River Thames, a preserved Second World War and Cold War warship (IWM n.y.e).

This development is the product of a previous change in ethos at the museum, change that can be traced back to the turbulent events which arose during the Second World War. Indeed, the museum which exists today only does so because, as will be argued herein, internal and external challenges and

pressures, brought about over 1939-1945, catalysed the need for a new *raison d'être* and rationale, prompting questions addressed by the coming chapters about the propensity of museums to overcome challenging situations, or crises.

The reason that the Imperial War Museum has been selected as the focus throughout this thesis is because the museum provides an opportunity to understand the concept of crisis, whether different types of crisis situation can be associated with different states that museums find themselves in, indeed any organisation, and the interplay between crisis types and museums. Moreover, and equally importantly, studying the Imperial War Museum helps differentiate between difficult situations which could represent a crisis and those difficult situations which could not. The ability to draw this distinction not only deepens the understanding of the concept, but also helps direct its application.

This thesis considers various challenging situations faced by the Imperial War Museum over the Second World War. The first was the need to maintain what has been framed as a civic service. This involved finding a role in service of civil society, fulfilling its wants, needs and interests when the conflict disrupted routine operations. The second was the tangible effects of the conflict, specifically the German aerial attacks on London via the Blitz campaigns, 'tip and run' raids and V-weapon launches. These attacks caused substantial damage across London, including to the Imperial War Museum. One post-war report on the bomb damage sustained by the national museums singled out the Imperial War Museum for its unparalleled damage compared with neighbouring institutions (Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries 1948: p. 17). And the third was the new social and cultural context that the conflict ushered in, creating a situation for which the Imperial War Museum had never been intended. Until the Second World War, the First World War, or the Great War, had been popularly understood as the 'war to end all war': a sentiment associated with Woodrow Wilson, but which originates from a thesis conceived by H. G. Wells in his 1914 book *The War That Will End War* (Budgen 2018). The Imperial War Museum was founded and operated on this assumption over

its first 22 years. But the Second World War nullified that understanding, forcing the museum to confront a future of uncertainty.

1.3 Thesis Research, Approach and Motivation

1.3.1 Conceptual strand

In investigating the capability of museums at managing crises, this thesis takes a deliberately broad view over the concept. It therefore considers crisis and crisis management from different angles. Moreover, it considers concepts that feed into the discourse and understanding of crisis management, including qualities required of a museum undertaking crisis management, and strategies which can be deployed to achieve this. As such, this thesis not only considers crises emerging from structural or systemic degradation, but also societal change. The Imperial War Museum during the Second World War is an ideal case study with which to investigate these variances in crisis. As discussed, on one hand, it experienced threats from German aerial attacks against London. On another, it experienced the threat of becoming irrelevant in the post-war era if it did not reinvent itself conceptually and take into consideration the Second World War. These have been considered over six case study chapters.

During each chapter, a different concept is analysed and examined against to examples from the case study alongside previously introduced concepts. Concepts in historical organisational research are valuable academic tools. This is because they support the conception of connections, relationships and greater meaning between different events (Maclean, Harvey and Clegg 2016: p. 624). Indeed, the concept of crisis points out ways in which various difficulties at the Imperial War Museum cohere to form a critical existential phenomenon and help ascertain the phenomenon's significance. Accordingly, concepts help formalise the interpretation of information derived from primary sources. They also profile the working assumptions made about this information by the researcher during the research process (Fulbrook 2002). The two main conceptual lenses deployed herein, alongside others, are focussed on analysing

crisis and reinvention. Through using these, a case is made that the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era was confronted with systemic crisis which the institution had to manage its way out of, or away from.

It is an inevitability that museums will at some point in their existence encounter a challenging situation to their continuance, both those possessing defensive and revolutionary qualities (Gurian 1995a: p. 17). For some, the challenging situation will result in the museum closing. For others, however, the challenging situation is overcome. Whether a museum experiences the first or second outcome may greatly depend on the approach taken to their management. It remains the proposition of this thesis, therefore, that museums will prevail or fail based on several considerations. The first is their readiness to overcome adversity. In this context, readiness means the wherewithal to overcome and survive challenging situations. The wherewithal could comprise the development of strong and sturdy physical infrastructure and hard assets. But it could also comprise a diverse, and highly qualified and creative workforce, and strong, supportive organisational culture. By being ready for adversity, museums will be ready for challenging situations, essential if they are to survive. The second is the ability to adjust as and when required. In this context, to adjust means to modify when the prevailing paradigm no longer suits the prevailing environment. No social system inhabits a protracted period of stasis, even if day-to-day life creates this perception. In stable societies, change occurs after several generations (Van Wart 1995: p. 429). Museums must be attuned to this, being as they are followers of trends of the social system (Black 2021a: p. 3). Not doing so risks a museum being left behind by society and rendered irrelevant.

1.3.2 Historical strand

This thesis considers the activities of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era. As will be shown, the Second World War was an important period in the museum's overall development. Moreover, the case is yet to attract sustained critical attention of museum historians and staff. This

raises questions over whether IWM today fully understands itself in both historical and contemporary contexts. The current extent of the scholarship likely stems from multiple reasons, though one notable possible contributing factor is that few photographs exist of the museum during the Second World War and immediate post-war eras, a feature formerly identified by Sue Malvern (2000: p. 194). As Leonie Hannan and Sarah Longair (2017: p. 45) comment, visual material culture can be influential in stimulating historical enquiry. This is especially the case when no prior impetus for any research project exists. In view of that, the limited extant visual evidence illustrating the activities of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era may have caused an oversight of the museum's wartime history. It may also have fuelled anecdotal misperceptions received about the museum's inertia over the conflict.

Whatever the reason/s for the limited scholarship on the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War, it has fostered contestable perspectives amongst interested parties that has proceeded to mythologise the museum's historical existence with potential ramifications on contemporary understanding. One example, as will be shown, is the proliferation of the narrative told by Noble Frankland, the museum's Director-General from 1960 until 1982. Over two publications, Frankland (1995: p. 127; 1998: pp. 163-164) portrays the museum as having lost its purpose during the Second World War at the hand of an ineffectual Director-General who was more content with winding up the museum than working for its lasting continuance. With no other commentary available, this narrative has been recounted by employees during their own publications on the museum (Charman 2008: pp. 104-105; Taylor 2009: pp. 55-56). Such situations are clearly undesirable for museums, indeed any formal organisation, for they do little more than strengthen the myth and legend that exists to the detriment of knowledge with greater basis in fact (Gabriel 2000).

This thesis remedies a perceived lack of understanding about the Imperial War Museum over the years spanning 1933-1950, particularly 1939-1946. It does so by researching what John Tosh (2002: p. 38) calls the museum's

‘historical process’. This was the critical development from a museum on the ‘war to end all war’ to a museum on both the First World War and the Second World War while fending off the effects of aerial attacks on London and maintaining a civic service. The thesis’ argument therefore is that the form IWM today assumes derives from decisions and actions taken there to ensure it overcame challenging situations posed by the Second World War. Specifically, the thesis posits that the museum, which reopened to the public following the Second World War, had evolved from the one which closed at the conflict’s start. It shows that the course followed on reopening was set towards fulfilling a totally different mission from the one originally set out on at establishment.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The aims and objectives of this thesis are met over nine chapters: three background chapters and six case study chapters, not including the current chapter or the conclusion. Chapters two, three and four provide contextual information on which the case study analysis is built. Chapter two, the first background chapter, considers the research that has already been conducted on or touches the Imperial War Museum before, during and after the Second World War and the concept of crisis in relation to museums. This includes published academic literature such as monographs, book chapters and journal articles, and unpublished literature such as doctoral theses and master’s dissertations. It then locates this thesis in the received wisdom conveyed by that body of literature and highlights the study’s original contribution to knowledge. The chapter also explores the extent that museum history has been treated in prevailing museum studies literature and the professional sector. Through doing so, it reviews the major development in museum historiography from the past 30 years and to what extent it has influenced the literature on the history of the Imperial War Museum. Chapter three shows how what was believed to be discoverable about the case became known. It does so by considering the positionality adopted when conducting the research, the methods that went into conducting the

research, and the execution of the research. And chapter four introduces the concepts used in the thesis: institutions, organisations and museums; crisis, and crisis management; resilience; and reinvention. This is a particularly important chapter as it analyses the conceptual foundations which inform the case study.

Chapters five through ten present the case study proper. Chapter five, the first case study chapter, explores the Imperial War Museum as an institution, organisation and museum. It does this to contextualise the case, the Imperial War Museum, at the centre of the study and on which crisis is investigated. The chapter demonstrates that the Imperial War Museum possessed institutional, organisational and museological components consistent with institutions, organisations and museums today, demonstrating the case's relevance.

Chapter six explores the work carried out by the Imperial War Museum to maintain a civic service during the Second World War. It focuses on both the public facing and non-public facing activities which went on to comprise this. As a result, the chapter further develops the understanding of the concept of crisis by showing that not all difficult situations necessarily conform to it.

Chapters seven and eight explore two crisis situations raised in this thesis. Chapter seven does this by exploring the effects of German aerial attacks against London on the Imperial War Museum. It demonstrates how crises deriving from tangible conditions via events, which cause superficial impact, need to be defended against. Chapter eight, by contrast, does this by exploring the effects of the Second World War on the pre-1939 *raison d'être* and rationale of the Imperial War Museum. It demonstrates how crises deriving from intangible conditions via value shifts in the social system, which cause impact under the surface, need to be resolved through accepting revolutionary structural changes that bring about coherence between a museum and society.

Finally, chapters nine and ten zoom in on the revolutionary crisis profiled during chapter eight and explore reinvention as an approach for managing such situations. They demonstrate that the reinvention of a museum requires a two-stage process. The first involves reconceiving the museum's *raison d'être* and

rationale. Chapter nine covers this by exploring work that was undertaken to reconceive the *raison d'être* and rationale of the Imperial War Museum in line with the new social, cultural and political landscape arising from the Second World War. The second stage involves aligning the museum's heterogeneous components accordingly. Chapter ten covers this by exploring work of the Imperial War Museum to realise its new *raison d'être* and rationale, focussing on acquiring Second World War-related collection items and space.

1.5 Chosen Referencing System

Having been conceived foremostly as a 'museum study', this thesis follows the spirit of the field's academic conventions. In particular, it employs the Harvard author-date referencing system considered standard for such research projects, specifically the variation developed by Coventry University (2017). This poses challenges to the referencing of archival material however, as the Harvard system is too restrictive for use against sources with diverse bibliographical qualities. Gaynor Kavanagh (1994: p. 6) encountered a similar situation when writing her monograph *Museums and the First World War: A Social History*. She writes that 'In Britain, historians rarely use it' (*ibid.*), a situation which remains the case. Inspired by Kavanagh's approach to overcoming this difficulty, the referencing system used is a conflation of the Coventry Harvard system and numerated footnote system of the Modern Humanities Research Association (2013). As such, all publications and unpublished dissertations and theses consulted have been cited in the main text. Full references to these works are then presented at the end in a bibliography. Archival sources, by contrast, have been fully referenced from the beginning using numerated footnotes. A list of accession numbers for the archival files consulted heads up the bibliography.

1.6 Use of Acronyms

It should be noted that even before 2011 the Imperial War Museum was often known and referred to as 'the IWM'. This acronym is omnipresent throughout the supporting archival sources cited herein. To try and avoid any confusion that may arise from this therefore, the use of acronyms has been avoided in the main

text unless on the following two occasions: firstly, where they are directly quoted from a source, and secondly, where the name of an entity is officially represented by one. Consequently, the acronym IWM when used outside quotation marks concerns the museum from 2011 onwards.

1.7 Chapter Conclusion

To summarise, this historical museum study explores the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War and the years either side: a study of institutional endurance, from which many lessons can be derived and applied in the present context. Presented over nine chapters concerning issues framed around crisis management and reinvention, it investigates the historical process through which the museum transformed over 1939-1946 from a museum on the ‘war to end all war’ to a museum on both the First World War and the Second World War. In doing so, the study reveals possibilities and options for museums today facing hostile conditions or major change in their constituencies or constituents’ needs.

The study brings sharply into focus the adaptability of museums generally when faced with critical situations and/or operationally difficult environments. It comprises what Tosh (2002: p. 30) calls a ‘knowledge bank’, presenting various possibilities and options derived from the experience of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War and surrounding years which contemporary policy makers can draw on when planning for critical difficulty (Douglas 2013: p. 469). The findings exemplify an organisation’s ability, or rather that of the staff, to evaluate the situation being confronted and, in response, implement appropriate mitigating strategies. Together, these can secure a museum’s both short-term and long-term survival. By focussing on the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War and surrounding years, the research reveals the resilience and creativity emanating from museums operating in operationally difficult environments. It also demonstrates how such resilience and creativity might manifest through such an organisation’s actions.

In the next chapter, this thesis sets out the existing literature on the topics concerning it, to assess the breadth and depth at which they address the issues.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Introduction

As set out in chapter one, I consider over following chapters how crises disrupt museums and the contrasting defensive and revolutionary strategies which museums must adopt when mitigating crisis situations. This topic is addressed through a historical study on the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era. The first task I undertook towards it involved discovering the existing knowledge concerning the constituent subject strands. This involved carrying out a review of the prevailing literature on the extent and writing of museum history, the early- and mid-history of the Imperial War Museum, and museums and crisis, which subsequently guided the research's purview. Doing so from the outset helped identify trends and gaps in the existing knowledge. These findings subsequently went on to help inform the thesis' purview and the approach towards accomplishing its aims. The current chapter presents the key points from those findings and reveals how the themes have evolved over the years as different authors engaged with them. Through undertaking the above, the chapter helps address aim one, objectives one through three; aim two, objectives one through three; aim four, objective one; aim five, objective one; and aim six, objective one of this study (see chapter one, section 1.1).

This chapter explores the above over four substantive sections. The first section (2.2) reviews literature on museum history. Specifically, it explores the views of museologists, museum professionals and practitioner-researchers on museum history, particularly its value and importance. With those findings in mind, the second substantive section (2.3) reviews the historical literature on the Imperial War Museum. It undertakes this survey to understand the focus of the constituent pieces and the various critical interests which their authors have conveyed. These different historiographic approaches return the chapter to literature on museum history, with the third substantive section (2.4) considering how museum historiography has developed. It explores the dominant approach

in museum history – effective history, conceived by museum historian and museologist Eilean Hooper-Greenhill – ascertaining the impact this approach has had over the previously discussed literature about the Imperial War Museum, and its appropriateness for the present thesis. Ending with this thesis’ own critical thrust, the fourth substantive section (2.5) reviews the literature on museums and crisis. As with the second section, it seeks to understand the focus of the constituent pieces and the critical interests which their authors convey.

2.2 Museum History

Museums are written about by all sorts of people. These include the professionals who work in them, the academics who study them, the politicians who use them as keystones for policy, the polemicists who stoke up debate on issues connected with them, and the advocates who believe society can be bettered through them. Occasionally, people will undertake this from multiple positionalities (Mason 2019: pp. 12-13). In writing about museums, authors bring to bear their own unique axiologies. They also focus on the museal elements that interest them the most. Common discussion points featured in the completed writings about museums include, but are not limited to, what a museum is and is for, and the *raison d’être* and rationale of individual museums under consideration. Museums, therefore, are powerful constructs. Accordingly, they garner interest from people who seek to understand the potential of that power, or who seek to draw on it towards their own ends. Museum history is just one conduit for this interest. From different vantage points, historians who study museums seek to show how society has developed, harnessed and interacted with them. This can be accomplished through institutional, object and staff biographies, studies of museums in societal change, and writings about relevant governmental policy, public ideas and debate (*ibid.*: p. 15).

Museum history is an established research area in museum studies. This can be illustrated by the many contributions to *Museum History Journal* and the *Journal of the History of Collections*, and the establishment of academic groups

such as the Museums and Galleries History Group. It has been a research area long before museum studies, or critical museology, had even matured into a defined field (Lorente 2012: p. 238; see, for example, Murray 1904; Bazin 1959; Alexander 1983). Through studying museum history, researchers can explore how institutions, the museum profession and the sector more broadly have developed. A benefit of this is that it gives museum practitioners and institutions a chance to “‘know thyself’ in important ways’, as museum historian Kate Hill (2017), the current Museums and Galleries History Group chair, explains. Yet curiously, engagement in historical research on institutions, the museum profession and the sector has been something which museum practitioners have appeared reluctant to do. The publication of *The Responsive Museum: Working with Audiences in the Twenty-first Century* is a good case in point. Written and edited by various museum practitioners and allied professionals, this compendium sets out to ‘make [...] meaning from the complex and ever-evolving and changing relationship between museums and their audiences’ (Lang, Reeve and Woollard 2006: p. xvii). But through doing so, the book focuses almost exclusively on the then present context, with only the briefest of glances at historical development in the museum sector thitherto. While a firm historical grounding was understandably not what the volume editors had envisaged for this work, it nonetheless, as reviewer and museologist Graham Black (2007: p. 129) argues, limits the book’s practical life and weakens the key points made therein by the contributors. After all, being left deprived of historical context not only reduces the potential for more lasting significance, but also fails to show why the issues under consideration are significant.

This prompts two questions about museum history. The first revolves around why the museum profession might be reluctant to engage with it more readily. One plausible answer has arisen from a round table discussion, involving museum researchers, practitioners and practitioner-researchers, chaired by Hill in 2016. The general consensus, conveyed through Hill’s (2017) writeup of the proceedings, is that museums today are fixated on their present

and future contexts. This, her write-up continues, occurs through conditioning, driven by both organisational amnesia and concern for a public backlash, were museums seen to focus on anything other than their onward progress (*ibid.*).

Similar charges have subsequently been levelled by museum historian Catherine Pearson (2017). In a two-pronged attack, she accuses the profession today of being overly obsessed about the future course of the sector, while being overly concerned about its historical course ‘for fear of having to acknowledge past mistakes’ (*ibid.*: p. 258). This is certainly the perception obtained from anecdotal conversations with some curators employed by the Imperial War Museum, who expressed embarrassment with their institution’s early practices. That museum practitioners have entered a chronic state of hyper-reflexivity over their profession has been attributed by museologist Andrea Witcomb (2003) to the negative critiques directed towards museums during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. In avant-garde circles, she explains, they have been viewed as being ‘backwards looking’, representing the ‘values and interests of the dominant elite’ (*ibid.*: p. 8). In post-modernist circles, by contrast, they have been likened to structures of ‘capitalism or class interests [...], imperialism and colonialism [...], and the harmful representation of women’ (*ibid.*: p. 9).

The second question revolves around what ramifications this apparent disinterest poses institutions, the profession and sector. According to Witcomb, in the Western world, the answer can be found through the frequently encountered negative internal conceptions of their development. Often, she continues, institutions have become preoccupied with their hegemonic pasts, for which reinvention is presented as the only solution (*ibid.*: pp. 9-10). This persists despite plentiful historical evidence of historically progressive practices. Interestingly, such ideas have also been conveyed by art critic Brian O’Doherty (1972: p. 2) who, 30 years prior, wrote that ‘museums, deprived of the confidence in their history that guides institutions as they move into the future, are having difficulty in taking bearings on their present condition’.

Work undertaken by museums across the United Kingdom during the Second World War provides a good example of where historically progressive practices are effaced from museum history. Following recent research on the subject, Pearson (2017: p. 259) concludes that: ‘In [...] [the Second World War], curators responded [...] by actively using a wide range of collections and by linking objects to current issues that connected with people’s lives’. But before this research was conducted, the received wisdom on museum experience across the United Kingdom during the Second World War came across quite differently. Museum historian and museologist Gaynor Kavanagh, for example, writes that the Second World War years were years where ‘few significant museum developments’ occurred (1990: p. 32) despite there being various ‘promising’ professional developments during the 1930s (1994: p. 166). This is concurred with by museum historian Robert Richardson (1995: p. 92), who writes that ‘the Second World War prevented [...] [those professional developments] from being a spur towards initiatives’. Taking a slightly different line, museum historian and museologist Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1991: p. 61) writes that ‘the devastating effects of two world wars on staff recruitment and availability, and on continuity of work, and at crucial moments a failure of vision, nerves and consensus, have taken their toll from the achievements of museums’. This is concurred with by museum practitioners P. Brears and S. Davies (1989: pp. 116-117), who write that ‘The Second World War retarded museum development in this country by between 10 and 20 years. [...] After the war most museums struggled to pick up the momentum which they had lost in 1939’. Such underthought representations of historical museum practice risk condemning the museum profession to postures where management decisions concerning a museum’s situation in the present context are made defensively, rather than proactively (Witcomb 2003: p. 77; Pearson 2017: p. 258).

2.3 Literature on the Imperial War Museum

2.3.1 Contextualising the literature

The academic literature on the history of the Imperial War Museum represents a burgeoning body. As with more general museum history from the United Kingdom however, its coverage is patchy. Representation of the foundational and more recent years far outstrip the Second World War and immediate post-war years. In line with the above discussion on the benefit that can be derived from museum history, this is problematic. The imbalance does not just prohibit a fair and nuanced historical discourse about the development of the Imperial War Museum, it also limits understanding about important decisions and practices that emerged during this time which continue to impact the institution today.

Since 1985, some 25 historically oriented studies have been produced about the Imperial War Museum – including unpublished master’s and doctoral research dissertations and theses, and any publications resulting from them – concerned entirely with, or which possess significant sections on, the institution and its first 33 years from 1917 until 1950. These come in three waves, generating a body of knowledge about the museum itself and the issues and ideas connected with it. The first comprises the 1980s-1990s wave, the second comprises the 2000s wave, and the third comprises the 2010s wave. The term *historically oriented* represents all the academic works on this subject rooted in historical enquiry, not solely related to conventional histories.

2.3.2 The first wave, 1985-1999

Early historical writings on museums are often undertaken by individuals with connections to them. They could be directors, other staff members, or stakeholders who have interest in their existence. The first wave on the Imperial War Museum is a good example of this. Alongside academic studies by independent researchers Gaynor Kavanagh (1988; 1994) and Susanne Brandt (1994), it comprises academic studies by Diana Condell (1985), a curator at the institution, and an amateur study by Robert Miller (1999), a volunteer guide

there. Each consider the circumstances surrounding the institution's establishment and early development. Of all the works comprising the overall historiography, these are the ones that most closely represent *conventional history*, which Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth (2007: p. 51) describes as a 'gathering and collation of information or "facts", the reference to actions of "individuals", and reliance of productive causality as an explanatory mechanism'.

The elemental developmental history of the Imperial War Museum, covering its inception in 1917, formal opening on 9 June 1920, and the following formative years, originally came about through research undertaken by Condell (1985) and Kavanagh (1988). Both show that the museum was born from the ambition of several individuals – namely Alfred Mond, the First Commissioner of Works; Charles ffoulkes, Curator of the Tower Armouries (see ffoulkes 1939); and Ian Malcom, a backbench Conservative Member of Parliament – with interest in commemorating the country's war dead. They also emphasise that the institution's establishment and lasting continuance occurred against widespread hostility in political and civic quarters towards the initiative.

Interestingly, this is, by Kavanagh's (1994: p. 7) own admission, despite their marked differences of approach. Condell's (1985) research, for example, pays greater granular attention than Kavanagh's (1988) to the political twists and turns in the development undergone by the Imperial War Museum. She is also deliberately measured when addressing criticism surrounding the institution (Condell 1985), and protective of the institution's *raison d'être* and rationale in the modern context (Condell 2002), not that Kavanagh (1988; 1994) comes across adversarial or unsympathetic. The first difference can be explained on account of Condell's (1985) work being much more extensive than Kavanagh's (1988). The second is posited on account of her employment at the museum.

This elemental history is developed by Brandt (1994) and Miller (1999), who both place Condell (1985) and Kavanagh's (1988) research in greater context. Miller (1999) enriches the existing narrative by focussing on the role of four key individuals central to the early Imperial War Museum. He does it with

a notable flair for circumstantial detail, which is woven throughout. Brandt (1994) synthesises the existing narrative with other narratives about the French Bibliographie et Musée de la Guerre and German Weltkriegsbücherei. She does this towards a study on early European twentieth century museological representations of war. In doing so, Brandt produces the first ever comparative study involving the Imperial War Museum, showing how its development compared with the other institutions featured during the study.

2.3.3 The second wave, 2000-2008

The second wave represents the beginnings of a step-change in the interest maintained by the scholarly community undertaking research on the history of the Imperial War Museum. It marks the point when the broader historiography begins to develop and sophisticate the commentary around the institution. As with the first wave, this second wave comprises studies by both independent researchers and staff employed at the institution. They include Sue Malvern (2000), an independent researcher; Roger Smither and David Walsh (2000), curators at the institution; Steven Cooke and Lloyd Jenkins (2001), independent researchers; Diana Condell (2002) as above; N. J. McCamley (2003), an independent researcher; Paul Cornish (2004), a curator at the institution; and Terry Charman (2008), a historian at the institution. The works can be segmented into two distinct categories, with independent researchers and staff occupying both. One is a conventional approach akin to the first wave. The other is a more critical approach where the history of the Imperial War Museum comprises the conduit for themes, concepts or ideas. Put another way, the institution's history becomes the means to an end, not the end itself. That it expands the history of Imperial War Museum is a secondary outcome.

The first category is occupied by Smither and Walsh (2000), Condell (2002), McCamley (2003) and Charman (2008). These researchers focus their attention on particular individuals, events and themes surrounding the Imperial War Museum, expanding the narrative produced by Condell (1985), Kavanagh

(1988), Brandt (1994) and Miller (1999) in the process. Smither and Walsh (2000) research the work of Edward Foxen Cooper, the film advisor during the interwar years to the Imperial War Museum. Condell (2002) researches the institution's historical development, augmenting salient points from her 1985 study with new, if limited, findings on the institution's Second World War and post-war years as well as the years of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. McCamley (2003) researches the work by the London national museums, including the Imperial War Museum, to protect their collections and premises from aerial attack during the Second World War. It should be noted, however, that this study requires careful reading, as certain facts presented by McCamley regarding the Imperial War Museum are either disprovable or unverifiable in the archive. And Charman (2008) researches the historical development of the Imperial War Museum along similar lines to Condell (2002). Notwithstanding McCamley's (2003) inaccuracies, each aforementioned study possess value. The most relevant to this project however was the one produced by Charman (2008), who pitches the Second World War as the catalyst for institutional decline, which only reversed following a change in leadership there during 1960 (see Frankland 1998, a major source for Charman 2008). This is significant, because it reveals the origins of the negative attitudes mentioned above at the Imperial War Museum about the museum's Second World War and post-war history. It also spurred other staff to share similar views, such as James Taylor (2009), the then Head of Research and Information, who directly references Charman's (2008) findings in his own publication on the museum.

This leaves Malvern (2000), Cooke and Jenkins (2001) and Cornish (2004) who occupy the second, more critically oriented category. Malvern (2000) uses the history of the Imperial War Museum to explore basic museological concepts such as display and representation through art and artefacts. She reveals the way in which the institution interpreted war and armed conflict from 1920 until the 1950s, showing how it tracked public perception towards the First World War. These issues and ideas are later developed by

Cornish (2004), who researches the way that the perceived social dimensions of objects were applied in interpreting war and armed conflict at the Imperial War Museum during the interwar years. Similarly to Malvern (2000), he shows how these perceptions evolved and were replaced, one example being the toning down at the institution in offering, what Nicholas J. Saunders (2001: p. 479) calls, ‘a national focus for the commemorative materiality of war-related objects’ as interwar pacifism reached its zenith. Cooke and Jenkins (2001) research urban regeneration through the transfer of the Imperial War Museum to the former Bethlem Royal Hospital building, Southwark, during the 1930s. They reveal the discourse around its removal and show that the potential which museums have for improving built-up environments was recognised long before policy saw artists and cultural organisations take a lead on regeneration in the 1970s (García 2004). While what Cooke and Jenkins (2001) cover is interesting, Malvern (2000) and Cornish’s (2004) research bore most relevance to this study. Together, they offer perspectives on the institution’s transforming mentality around its *raison d’être* and rationale as conveyed through their public facing work, which hitherto had been missing from the historiography.

2.3.4 The third wave, 2011-2017

The third and most recent wave represents another advancement in the research carried out on the history of the Imperial War Museum. The studies emerging over this period indicate a golden age for critique on the institution. This derives in part from IWM being awarded Independent Research Organisation status by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, providing the institution with the wherewithal to commission several of the research outputs discussed below (IWM 2011b: p. 3). The wave includes work by Debbie Whittaker (2010), an independent researcher; Paul Cornish (2012) as above; Alyson Mercer (2013; 2015), an independent researcher; Jennifer Wellington (2013; 2017), an independent researcher; Rachel Gifford (2015), an independent researcher; Alys Cundy (2015a; 2015b; 2017a; 2017b; 2017c), a researcher part-supported by the

institution; and Alexandra Fae Walton (2017), a curator at the institution. All but one of the researchers here commenced their research while undertaking postgraduate study. Two were master's students; four were doctoral students. This means that the label of golden age can also be applied to the interest that postgraduate researchers have paid the museum's history. Moreover, it is noted that Mercer (2013; 2015), Cundy (2015a; 2015b; 2017a; 2017b; 2017c) and I are all postgraduate alumni of the same department at Newcastle University.

The third wave is notable for its close attention to matters of collection and display at the Imperial War Museum, unlike the first wave which focusses on broader institutional matters and the second wave which has no particular focus. The most important contributions in this regard are made by Wellington (2013) and Cundy (2015a). Their research offers rich and conceptually rooted analyses of the collecting and display practices by Imperial War Museum. Both commence their investigations at the institution's inception during 1917. Wellington's (2013) research forms part of a broader multi-institutional study including the Australian War Memorial and Canadian War Museum. This means she ends her study in the interwar years. Overall, Wellington covers much the same ground as Condell (1985) and Kavanagh (1988). Her approach, however, is more aligned with Malvern (2000) in that it draws on concepts to explain her interpretations. Cundy's (2015a) research concentrates solely on the Imperial War Museum. She therefore extends her investigation to the twenty-first century, including the interwar years, Second World War, post-war years and latter twentieth century. Again, Cundy covers much the same ground as Condell (1985; 2002), Kavanagh (1988) and Charman (2008), but in more detail, particularly for the post-war, late twentieth and early twenty-first century. In line with Wellington (2013), her approach is akin to Malvern's (2000). When read alongside the research undertaken by Cornish (2012), who explores the collection and representation of large and ephemeral objects, Mercer (2013), who explores the collection and representation of women's war work, and

Walton (2017), who explores the collection and representation of prints at the institution, both bring the practices of Imperial War Museum into relief.

The two outliers from this wave are Whittaker (2010) and Gifford (2015), who pursue more conventional histories. Gifford's (2015) comparative study on the foundation of the Imperial War Museum, the French Bibliographie et Musée de la Guerre and the American Liberty Memorial provides few fresh revelations about the institution. Her narrative diverges seldom from that established by Condell (1985) and Kavanagh (1988). Accordingly, the study comprises a competent piece of supporting literature to received wisdom on the museum's establishment. Whittaker's (2010) comparative study on the Imperial War Museum and neighbouring National Gallery, Victoria and Albert Museum and British Museum over 1939-1945, by contrast, comprises a ground-breaking history of the activities of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War. This is a period in the institution's existence which has received scant attention, outwith minimal consideration by McCamley (2002) and passing reference from Malvern (2000), Charman (2008) and Cundy (2015a). Whittaker (2010) covers safeguarding measures, service provision and post-war planning at the Imperial War Museum. She handles many of the issues and ideas raised by other contributors here through strong historical and critical analysis. Consequently, it has provided much needed orientation for this project where other more advanced studies have been unable to. This clearly demonstrates the valuable contribution master's research can make in furthering knowledge.

2.4 Writing Museum History

The three waves of scholarship on the Imperial War Museum presented above show a development in the analytical approach to its historically minded study. Over the first wave, the institution was both the subject and object being investigated. By the third wave however, the object had shifted to other elements. This shift transpired not long after the development undergone by broader museum history, which occurred at the same time as the first wave. It is

important to understand what that development represents, and whether the development impacted on the historiography of the Imperial War Museum.

During 1991, museum historian and museologist Hooper-Greenhill proposed a new and radical approach to producing museum history. Presented in her 1992 monograph *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge* and drawing on historiographical work pioneered by philosopher Michel Foucault (1970; 1974; 1977), this approach came about through detecting insufficient critical engagement by the then prevailing museum historians with the inescapably complicated system of ideas and processes that embody museums, or the ramifications these ideas and processes have for people and practices connected therewith. Rather, the so-called ‘normal histories’ that museum historians were producing, she explains, comprised linear, processual narratives, which started at point ‘A’ and finished at point ‘B’. They tended to be smooth, neat and tidy affairs, with emphasis on the origin of a museum and determining how it reached its contemporary state, rather than the specifics under discussion.

Awareness about this problem led Hooper-Greenhill (1992: p. 18) to identify two kinds of normal museum history. The first comprises an ‘all-encompassing “encyclopedic”’ museum history. These tend to be chronological, under-theorised descriptions of museum development, which have been written to uphold pre-conceived narratives about a museum or museums. Their analyses, while potentially quite detailed, are constrained by the limited linear purview. Accordingly, much of what is written in these histories comprise unquestioning assumptions about the museum or museums, or the conditions which enabled them to develop along the lines that they did. The second comprises a museum history through which ‘the slanting of the questioning of [...] contemporary documents [...] has failed to remark on quite critical points made by the documents themselves’ (*ibid.*: p. 21). These tend to be studies written by practitioners who are somehow ‘enmeshed’ in the work or institution under consideration, and therefore manage to yield bountiful primary sources for their research. When interpreting that evidence however, the historian reads the

primary sources from a particular angle, towards constructing a particular narrative. This could be a narrative about a significant figure in a museum's history, such as a collector, director, or curator, or it could be a museal practice.

Through becoming aware of these 'normal' historical approaches to museum history, Hooper-Greenhill puts forward what she conceives as an 'effective' alternative (*ibid.*: p. 11). Borrowing this term from Foucault's historiographical work, effective museum history supposedly rejects the teleology that underpins normal museum history, instead focussing on causality in museal development: 'breaks and ruptures which signal abrupt endings and painful new beginnings, violent change, and disruption' (*ibid.*). Hooper-Greenhill identifies three ingredients necessary when producing an effective museum history. The first is establishing a rooting in some context or conceptual framing for the history, involving all the internal and external elements that make up the museum under investigation (*ibid.*: p. 20). Museum historian Madhuparna Kumar (2006: p. 49) makes similar recommendations:

While, the history of museums requires an understanding of the internal history of the institutions touching on the way these institutions had evolved over time, how their administration became professionalised, how exhibitions were planned and set up for public consumption, this internal history needs to be situated against a larger backdrop in which politics remains an important player.

Politics is indeed one tranche of elements that can be used to root a museum history, but there are many more which might accompany those. Other possible tranches could include the social, cultural, and economic elements, amongst others. The second ingredient is a limited temporal purview. Hooper-Greenhill (1992: p. 20) argues that by focusing on clearly delineated boundaries in time, a history can cover multiple contextual or conceptual elements as just discussed. This is accomplished through focussing on one tranche, followed by another,

and another. The greater the number considered, the more fulsome the history will be. And the third and most complex ingredient is active guardedness against artificially drawing conclusions which fall outwith the purview of the sources available. When producing any history, it has become commonplace for historians to purposely read historical evidence towards reaching some specific critical conclusion, even if that conclusion's exact shape and form remains unknown at the research's outset. Such critical conclusions could revolve around, for example, an institution's structuration, director, or museal practice, amongst other possibilities, during some specific point in time. To Hooper-Greenhill, this raises problems for museum history because the historical evidence available may not be easily conducive towards reaching a specific critical conclusion. Her inference here, it appears, is that any points made therein run the risk of presenting as forced or contrived. Instead, Hooper-Greenhill argues that historical evidence should be read towards ascertaining the context in which that structuration, director or practice under consideration arose: all the factors, those internal and external elements, which impact on a museum's history. This context, she explains, could be 'a particular range of subject positions, or a particular set of technologies' (*ibid.*: p. 21).

Theoretically, there are clear benefits from using this historiographic approach. Its discontinuous, repetitive nature, for example, helps uncover greater meaning from an institution under investigation, meaning that might not be readily perceivable from analysing extant material in a single chronological survey. It is not, however, an approach which can be easily applied. While historians may easily conduct research over a limited temporal purview without much difficulty, the ability to identify all the internal and external elements that make up some museum, while analysing the primary sources conveying information on them without slanting their questioning, is rarely if ever possible.

In the first instance, the care and preservation of organisational records by individual museums remains unreliable. This is particularly the case with smaller or less professionally run organisations (Pearson 2017: pp. 11, 259). As

museum historian Claire Loughney (2006: p. 52) finds: ‘Over time sources are lost or certain material has been selected for preservation, whilst other material has been disposed of, leaving a biased sample’. The upshot of this is that a museum historian may not be able to identify let alone analyse all the elements available, as the necessary primary sources do not exist. In the second instance, most historians approach research with some central question guiding their thinking. Central questions help focus projects and ensure that the project remains achievable. Without them, research risks becoming messy, undefined, and potentially endless. As such, central questions are often prerequisites of postgraduate research projects, the result being that certain elements will inevitably require discounting from consideration because they are not relevant.

Hooper-Greenhill has herself been shown to fail to achieve an effective museum history in the very book where she first set out the principles underpinning this approach: *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. Loughney (2006: p. 53), for example, finds that ‘Hooper-Greenhill has decided not to identify all the elements [in her case study], as she previously advised, but has used her judgment to make the decision of focusing on a limited number of elements’. Historian Randolph Starn (2005: p. 74), furthermore, finds that: ‘Despite the critique of teleological plotting in museum history, her book culminates in a Whiggish teleology turned upside down’ – Whig history being a historiographic approach which assumes *a priori* the inevitability of historical progress towards social, cultural and political liberalism and enlightenment.

Despite the flaws perceived through Hooper-Greenhill’s articulation of her approach, museum historians are ill-advised to reject the concept without careful consideration first. This is because effective history should be viewed as a metaphorical toolbox containing discursive and analytical tools. It should not be viewed as a rigid, cohesive template. In conceiving and writing about effective history, Hooper-Greenhill has challenged museum historians to rethink how museum history should be produced. This means that it does not matter if certain angles of the approach are contradictory or unachievable towards

individual research projects. What is important is the way the approach makes museum historians think about their work. Indeed, it has had success in this regard. Following Hooper-Greenhill's intervention, various museum histories have been produced which deviate from normal historiographical approach (see, for example, Loughney 2006; Mazel 2013; Message 2014; McCarthy 2018; Mazel 2019). These are studies rooted in wider context intended to investigate how the institutions at the centre of their inquiry became the institutions they were. Moreover, the Museums and Galleries History Group (n.y.), acknowledging that museum historians have begun moving 'away from narrative institutional histories', held a conference during 2021 exploring museums as networked entities. All this is the aim of effective history. That research projects may be precluded for whatever reason from deploying effective history in a puristic form poses no barrier to its successful application.

Strictly speaking, none of the above historical studies on the Imperial War Museum meet the criteria articulated by Hooper-Greenhill (1992) for effective museum history. None have been written discontinuously, where limited temporal purviews are repeatedly analysed using different analytical lenses. Instead, they offer single chronological sweeps of some defined period from the museum's history. Moreover, none claim nor appear to offer an analysis involving all its internal and external elements, and each possess a slant on which the history is constructed. Yet the impact of Hooper-Greenhill's ideas can be perceived therein. The literature in the third wave is critically superior to the literature in the first, with Condell (1985) and Kavanagh's (1988; 1994) occurring before effective history was introduced in *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*. Over the second and third waves, the authors started engaging ever more directly with concepts that took the focus of the studies away from the Imperial War Museum *per se* to issues and ideas for which the museum was used as a host. Museological process assumed greater importance than historical process. Consequently, it can be argued that Hooper-Greenhill's fundamental call to improve museum history, which was launched via her historiographical

approach, has been heard by more recent historians of the Imperial War Museum, intentionally or otherwise, just not in a way she originally envisaged.

2.5 Literature on Crisis and Museums

2.5.1 The principles of crisis

This project drew heavily on Hooper-Greenhill's (1992) historiographical ideas about 'effective history'. Yet as with literature from the second and third waves discussed above, it was not a project which, strictly speaking, managed to implement the approach Hooper-Greenhill articulated in the original publication. That is because aside from possessing limited aims, the project's investigation centred around an explicit concept. Accordingly, the study necessitated some interpretation of historical evidence. The concept which this study centred around is crisis. As discussed above, through exploring the history of the Imperial War Museum over the Second World War, it sought to obtain greater understanding about how museums manage crisis-conducive situations. This requires ascertaining what knowledge already exists on museums and crisis. Before doing so, the concept of crisis requires some elucidation.

Crisis is a complex concept that has become semantically impoverished through recurrent expansion in meaning over many years (Graf and Jarausch 2017: para. 1). Possessing antiquarian origins, its application has increased significantly since the early twentieth century (Koselleck 2006: pp. 358-361, 397-400), with the worldwide Great Recession of 2007-2012 finally relegating the term to an everyday word (Borghini 2015: pp. 325-326). But even during the nineteenth century, people were bemoaning the word's overuse, showing that this issue has been developing for some considerable time (Glaesser 2003: p. 11). Notwithstanding specific technical usage in economics, medicine and psychology (Graf and Jarausch 2017: para. 3), today crisis is often raised during mediatic and academic discourse as a byword for negative and often complex social, economic and political situations (Ravail 2016: para. 2). Prompted by the expression's omnipresence and facilitated by its powerful rhetoric yet semantic

ambiguity, people exploit the term's ability to animate and cohere disparate events. Crisis has become a word that, with little thought, can spice up dull or dry narratives, increasing the intrigue in them (Graf and Jaraus 2017: para. 1).

The potential contemporary overuse of crisis in mediatic and academic discourse suggests to some that the idea should be avoided as a framing concept (*ibid.*: para. 38). This perception is not helped by the prospect that the historical and social context around its use has left any attempt at reclaiming some original meaning difficult to do, if not impossible (Borghini 2015: pp. 342). But abandoning the idea completely in academic work would be short-sighted. Firstly, its origins and technical uses still point towards the idea being a useful concept for the humanities and social sciences that can help researchers analyse critical situations effecting systems. And secondly, where theorised and utilised accordingly, the concept can help researchers reveal the tectonic undercurrents which cause critical situations in the first place: the crisis' pathology (Milstein 2015: p. 142). These include power relations, contestations and conflicts between individuals, communities and social structures (*ibid.*). As Andrea Borghini (2015: p. 342) concludes, there exist opportunities to develop new meanings for crisis, which can help produce new semantic value in the word.

A full analysis of crisis will be conducted during chapter four herein, thereby ensuring an appropriate understanding going forward from there. Until then, crisis can be sufficiently explained through the definition provided by the *Oxford English Dictionary*: 'A vitally important or decisive stage in the progress of anything; a turning-point; also, a state of affairs in which a decisive change for better or worse is imminent' (Oxford 1989). Put another way, ruptures requiring affirmative action to restore a sense of equilibrium. In exploring the concept of crisis, this project is interested with institutional moments characterised by difficulty, turmoil and struggle, specifically at the Imperial War Museum. These are moments when normal operations become challenging to the point where they cannot be performed at all and so become disrupted.

2.5.2 Contextualising the literature

Museums have long been associated with states of crisis (Stam 1993: p. 268). These could be tangible crises, such as those brought on by natural disaster, or intangible crises brought on by diminished or diminishing legitimisation. One of the earliest scholarly interventions in this regard was a compendium entitled *Museums in Crisis* edited by art critic O'Doherty and published in 1972. The work comprises ten articles on practical and theoretical problems then facing museums, many still chiming with relevance today. In his introduction, O'Doherty (1972: p. 3) paints a dismal picture of the museum concept following the post-Second World War period. He frames it as an institution that has become plagued by doubt about 'What should a museum's functions be?' to presiding over a profession that is 'underpaid, overworked and beleaguered from within and without [...] [and] not likely to be prolific in ideas on how to cope with the current, prolonged emergency'. His opening provocation contends: 'It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the museum is in a physical, financial, esthetic and spiritual disarray. Its survival as a viable institution [...] is in doubt' (*ibid.*: p. 2). The doubt conveyed by O'Doherty has persisted, with many of the themes raised in a more recent, similarly framed if less theoretical compendium by museum directors Zdenka Badovinac and Bartomeu Marí (2015).

This past use potentiated a broad discursive foundation on which crisis could be developed at varying breadths and depths by subsequent researchers and other museal writers. Curiously, however, few follow-up works have been produced that explicitly explore crisis from the museum perspective, both practically and theoretically, though this is predicted to change following the 2020-2021 global novel coronavirus pandemic (Koley and Dhole 2021; see Adams 2020; Richardson 2020; Stokes 2020). In the period between 2000 and 2020, for example, only ten museal publications have been found which directly address, or at least deploy, the concept. This is not to say that no other museal publications refer to crisis. Searches have picked up additional pieces of topical literature (such as Kemp 1989; Merriman 1999; Pollock 2003; Herbert 2006;

Dillon 2010; Badovinac and Marí 2015; Wegener 2015). Their age or limited considerations and theorisations, however, discount them from inclusion.

There is, of course, also the prevailing literature that considers themes akin to crisis, but which never explicitly discuss the concept. Four good examples in this regard comprise studies by museum director and researcher Robert R. Janes (2013) on the Glenbow Museum and museum historian Jeffrey Abt (2001; 2017) on the Detroit Institute of Arts, and a compendium edited by museum consultant Elain Heumann Gurian (1995b) on the impact institutional trauma has on staff. Janes' (2013) work, entitled *Museums and the Paradox of Change: A Case Study in Urgent Adaption*, analyses and critiques the work he himself led there as Director to turn around what was at the time the failing Glenbow Museum. A manifesto for change, this reflection is carried out alongside discussion on museum-related organisational theory and practice. The 2013 edition also includes an overview of the course of the Glenbow Museum after Janes' tenure as Director. Abt's (2001; 2017) works, entitled *A Museum on the Verge: A Socioeconomic History of the Detroit Institute of Arts, 1882-2000* and *Valuing Detroit's Art Museum: A History of Fiscal Abandonment and Rescue*, explore the historical development, economic difficulties and salvation of the Detroit Institute of Arts. The latter study comprises a continuation on the former, furthering the history by including recent events surrounding Detroit's bankruptcy during 2013. And Gurian's (1995b) edited work, entitled *Institutional Trauma: Major Change in Museums and Its Effects on Staff*, provides an administrative perspective on the challenges with museum change from upheaval. A particular point emphasised by this compendium is the importance of ensuring staff wellbeing while coping with difficult situations. All three have rooted the problems that confronted their respective case studies in situations which many readers would recognise as crisis. Yet, significantly, none have explicitly framed their studies along that line. At no point is the concept of crisis deployed to frame the works, a common trait amongst literature which handle issues and ideas concerning museums and turbulence or trauma.

Consequently, these works are not considered in the following, although they are drawn on elsewhere during this thesis. Rather, of the literature that has been considered below, each deliberately invokes crisis as introduced above: a period comprising difficulty or danger and disruption requiring careful management.

2.5.3 Financial crisis

Unlike the literature on the Imperial War Museum, there are no perceptible waves to the prevailing literature about crisis and museums. There are, however, a couple of thematic groupings. The first and most expansive revolves around financial crisis: crises that emanate from an entity's precarious financial position. Six pieces make up this grouping, written by researcher Tina R. Nolan (2009), researcher Katja Lindqvist (2012), campaigner and advocate Sharon Heal (2015), researcher Maegan A. Pollinger (2017), researchers Ioannis Poullos and Smaragda Touloupa (2018) and researcher Bethany Rex (2020). Each contribution has come about from the 2007-2012 Great Recession, which impacted on museums particularly heavily in certain countries such as the United Kingdom. This impact is emphasised by Heal (2015: p. 18), who frames the post-recession austerity imposed on the United Kingdom over 2010-2015 as a 'funding crisis', necessitating 'the museum of the future [...] look[ing] very different from the museum we are used to today'. In doing so, Heal writes about the imperative for change and adaptation to the *modus operandi* of British museums, her now largely correct prediction being that museums must become much more commercially minded to supplement dwindling public funding. This message becomes particularly relevant considering what she identifies as the failure by the government's proposed replacement – philanthropy – to make up the shortfall: 'when times are hard, people give less' (*ibid.*; see also Heal 2013).

Structural change as response to financial crisis is the primary concern in the prevailing literature. Business model changes, for example, comprises the central focus of a study carried out by Lindqvist (2012). In researching their economic vulnerability, Lindqvist argues that museums must develop and

maintain fluid and responsive income generation strategies during non-crisis periods (*ibid.*). These are strategies which do not overly rely on one type of income stream, such as public funding or philanthropy, but multiple streams. The upshot is a museum with greater potential to weather economic downturns. Accordingly, Lindqvist contends that museums should programme their public offer with all potential stakeholders in mind, incorporating variety and fluidity to the museum (*ibid.*). This necessitates continual realignment of museum outputs as their stakeholder priorities develop, thereby maintaining relevance. Another study, carried out by Rex (2020), looks at governance model changes. Specifically, she explores a process whereby museums are removed from public ownership during financial crisis, typically local authorities, and handed to private community organisations. Where such mechanisms exist, their liability is transferred, with the new community organisation assuming overall responsibility for the institution: its strategic direction, policy and finances.

Of these responses to financial crisis, researchers Poullos and Touloupa (2018) favour the approach put forward by Lindqvist (2012). Through reviewing different strategies employed by Greek archaeology museums during the 2007-2012 Great Recession, they argue that changes in ‘legal status’ remains the least desirable approach for museums to overcome such situations (Poullos and Touloupa 2018: p. 28). This is because the legal status and governance of museums comprises only ‘one of the many factors and certainly not the most important factor responsible for [...] museums’ responses to the crisis’ (*ibid.*). Rather, aligning with Lindqvist (2012), Poullos and Touloupa (2018: p. 29) contend that a holistic strategy which revolutionises the way individual institutions operate in the new context should be adopted: change involving all the elements of a museum. Interestingly, Rex (2020) also expresses caution over asset transfer, but for different reasons. Her concern revolves around the discrimination inherent in such processes. Rex argues that by accepting responsibility for administering their own museum, local communities are denied the right to a government service. Moreover, where government decides

on which communities should and should not be approached about the possibility of accepting responsibility, she argues that those communities undergo judgment about their capacity and interest, with potentially unfair results (*ibid.*: pp. 198-200). The discrimination lies in the assumptions made about different communities: their social, economic and cultural capital.

This change in organisational strategy as advocated by Poullos and Touloupa (2018) can be successful, but not without risk. While some policy interventions may have positive effects for museums, others may pose ramifications. This is shown through two contrasting studies from the United States, one focussing on the attempted revitalisation of historic house museums by Pollinger (2017), and another on the reconceptualisation of the role and function of museum educators by Nolan (2009). The first analyses the dwindling patronage experienced by American historic house museums before, during and after the 2007-2012 Great Recession. It also considers interventions to reverse this national downward trend in visitors and income. Amongst a range of opportunities, Pollinger identifies the garden spaces of historic house museums as being a largely untapped resource. Garden spaces, she shows, can serve as an interpretive device to foster relatability for contemporary visitors in otherwise largely unfamiliar contexts: the historical lifestyles represented by these heritage sites. Pollinger finds that those historic house museums which capitalised on their gardens through strategic policy interventions saw far greater patronage than those which did not. The positive effects conveyed in this study contrast with the ramifications conveyed in Nolan's (2009), which looks at the redeployment of museum educators following the 2007-2012 Great Recession. Nolan reveals that during financial crisis, museum directors have increasingly looked towards their education teams with ever more strategic mindsets. In doing so, she shows how museum educators have often become laden with additional responsibilities, or been reassigned new responsibilities completely, for which they never trained or envisaged undertaking to meet the top-down objectives of some new organisational strategy. The upshot, Nolan finds, is

disillusionment and dissatisfaction amongst specifically trained employees over their role and function at their institutions. This effect can be counterproductive by undermining a museum's holistic strategy to deal with its financial crisis.

2.5.4 Crisis communication

The second grouping involves crisis communication, wherein a museum protects its institutional reputation from degradation. Disasters and scandals can cause huge damage in this regard. Their impact potentiates a crisis of legitimacy for an organisation (Coombs 2007). Two studies consider this issue. The first is a study by Jasmine N. Duran (2014), and the second is a study by Marek Tomašík, Kateřina Víchová and Eva Černošková (2018). Tomašík, Víchová and Černošková's study introduces the concept of crisis communication in museums. Using cases from the Czech Republic, they present different crisis situations, and discuss how museums have communicated them. In doing so, Tomašík, Víchová and Černošková demonstrate that crisis communication strategies involve processes which few Czech museums appear equipped to carry out: a problematic situation, considering the importance of communication when performing crisis management and recovery. This is echoed throughout Duran's (2014) study, who furthers the discourse by considering the problems arising from not having any crisis communication strategy. By researching the relationship between three American museums, their stakeholders, and the impact of the media on each, she shows that crisis communication remains essential to stopping one kind of crisis or similar situation from catalysing another kind of crisis, such as a crisis of legitimacy. From reading this literature, the apparent resolution involves museums installing and reflexively updating infrastructure for managing crisis communication. There is the risk otherwise that some museum caught up amid a communication crisis will not have the necessary vocabulary to communicate publicly how the crisis is being rectified, in turn potentiating a crisis of legitimacy arising there.

2.5.5 Other crises involving museums

Two other pieces of literature have been identified which consider crisis from different, unassociated perspectives. They comprise studies by historian and geographer David Lowenthal (2009) and curator Elizabeth W. Easton (2011). The first study, by Lowenthal (2009), considers the crisis of doubt over the role and function of museums as similarly raised in O'Doherty (1972) and Badovinac and Mari's (2015) books. He frames the crisis however as a 'crisis in museum stewardship', where the 'fast-changing views of their proper functions lumber them with multiple and ever more incompatible missions' (Lowenthal 2009: p. 19). Through his study, Lowenthal shows that museums today are expected to empathise with the public and meet popular demand or face being denounced as out-of-step with society. At the same time, he shows that as they become more popular, the diversity of their work increases. Accordingly, its *raison d'être* and rationale become subject to ever greater questioning. This overall not only increases the politicisation of the museum space, but also can result in them being given greater responsibilities which historically would not have been put on museums. The upshot, Lowenthal shows, is a departure of the museum idea from its traditional identity, with many institutions becoming increasingly alienated over what they represent and comprise.

The second study, by curator and art historian Elizabeth W. Easton (2011), looks at the manifestation of an alleged crisis pervading the Western art world in art museums. This crisis stems from tensions through shifting priorities and diverging interests, expectations and engagement between the public, including the academy, and the traditional art canon (Anderson 2011), diminishing its relevance (Easton 2011: p. 335). In the academy, for example, Easton perceives that a focus on modern and contemporary art history, coupled with the tendency to bifurcate the educational tracks between curatorial practice and advanced museological study, has produced doctoral graduates unequipped for the broader art museum sector (*ibid.*). Accordingly, Easton discusses how some emerging art curators have dwindling skills, knowledge and experience

required by museums (*ibid.*). This in turn, she argues, catalyses a crisis of operationality. Essentially, art museums can no longer function along pre-existing lines because the available workforce cannot fulfil their needs. In response, Easton argues that art museums must create an environment which encourages the development of more rounded art graduates to meet their many and varied needs going forward (*ibid.*). It should be noted however that this crisis is not necessarily one experienced by art museums the Western world over. In the United Kingdom, for example, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (n.y.) – a government funded body that finances postgraduate research degrees – has long supported doctoral programmes incorporating some, and at times extensive, professional training such as curatorship. Indeed, this was the case with my own programme. I undertook two three-month-long placements at the Shipley Art Gallery in Gateshead and IWM in Duxford and London.

The predominant message of this literature is that to overcome crisis, museums must initiate some form of change which mitigates the situation. It could be institutional change, as discussed by Lindqvist (2012), Duran (2014), Heal (2015), Pollinger (2017), Poullos and Touloupa (2018), Tomaščík, Víchová and Černohlávková (2018) and Rex (2020), or it could be change in the social environment, as discussed by Easton (2011). Yet another noteworthy message is that change has risk for museums. It will not necessarily eradicate all difficulty from a museum's path. As Lowenthal (2009) and Nolan (2009) show, museums and museum staff can lose their sense of their direction, identity and purpose and, in turn effectiveness, through change to their *raison d'être* and rationale.

In considering these messages, it should also be noted that each constituent study appears to have treated crisis, unintentionally or otherwise, without substantial critical examination or theorisation, consistent with how crisis is often used today in research projects (Borghini 2015: pp. 325-326). Consequently, through each application, the concept risks being understood as an objective phenomenon, which can be universally and uniformly experienced. This is problematic. As will be discussed in greater detail during chapter four,

crises are unique, subjective constructs. It follows that one person's crisis is not necessarily another's. It also follows that one person's vision for dealing with crisis will not necessarily cohere with another's, or be as successful. To argue the opposite could invite accusations over misunderstanding the concept's discursivity (see Milstein 2015; Whitehead *et al.* 2019). Indeed, as the titular character of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* ([1602] 2017: p. 120) declares in act two, scene two, 'there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so'.

2.6 Chapter Conclusion

This background chapter raises several important features of the literature on the history of museums, the history of the Imperial War Museum, and museums and crisis. In the first substantive section, it has revealed that museum history is an established field comprising manifold studies stretching back before museums became subject to critical interest. Yet, few are seemingly authored by practitioners from the museum profession. This is to the profession's detriment, as individual institutions, indeed the museum sector overall, can benefit from understanding their historical development. In the second substantive section, the chapter has revealed that the modest literature on the history of the Imperial War Museum developed over three increasingly sophisticated waves. This occurred separate to and despite the broader historiographical development taking place across museum history at the time. Each subsequent wave maintained an increasing focus on specific concepts and ideas connected with the Imperial War Museum. Moreover, the second section revealed that the literature has largely avoided the historical period encapsulating the Second World War. Out of the various contributions which do consider it, the most influential present the war as being significant to the institution's mid-twentieth century decline. This is consistent with the early, broader writing on museums across the United Kingdom during the Second World War. In the third substantive section, the chapter has revealed that the main historiographical development of museum history over the past 30 years, effective museum

history, constitutes various discursive and analytical tools towards producing more insightful museum history. Despite problems detected with the original articulation, it has revolutionised the way museum history is produced. Studies appearing after 1992 are shown to be become much more considered, analytical and illuminating than those which came before. And in the fourth substantive section, the chapter has revealed that the concept of crisis is largely absent from museum literature. This transpires despite museums having been associated with crises over around 50 years since O'Doherty's (1972) *Museums in Crisis* was published. What literature does exist treats crisis with little if any critical analysis, instead using it to describe an institution's general state of organisational malaise as a set up for discussion on museum change and how that change helps, or hinders, the respective institution.

Through a historical study on the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War, this thesis explores the concept of crisis, the implications of crisis on museums, and the capability of museums in managing crisis-conducive situations. The above findings show that the issues and ideas it handles remain unaddressed by the prevailing literature. On the discourse surrounding the Imperial War Museum, the review has found that the museum's experience during the Second World War is largely unrepresented. The project therefore helps fill a gap through building on the research already carried out by authors Malvern (2000), McCamley (2003), Charman (2008), Whittaker (2010) and Cundy (2015a). This transpires in a small academic context where, despite its limited uptake, museum history has matured and become associated with high quality scholarship. The project therefore also helps further the practice and readership of museum history, drawing on prevailing historiographical thought. Concerning the more limited discourse surrounding museums and crisis, the review has found no pre-existing study wherein crisis is discussed as an abstract phenomenon. Moreover, whenever it has been raised, the reference occurs in discussions on museum change. Both these features occur through a limited theorisation of the concept by the authorship. The project therefore fills another

gap through producing a study which treats crisis discursively rather than empirically. This is to see what crisis means for museums and how museums respond when they strike. In doing so, it also shows that discussions on museums and crisis do not always take place in a context of museum change.

The following chapter continues to set out the background of this thesis by presenting the methodology that was used when undertaking the study. It reviews not only the practical methods which facilitated data collection, but also the theoretical positionality adopted while producing the thesis as well as the considerations that needed taking into account when carrying out those methods.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Chapter Introduction

The study presented in this thesis has been produced by engaging with and synthesising multiple practical and theoretical concepts and methods. It includes concepts that articulate how ideas are perceived, interpreted and valued, and the methods which inform and communicate those ideas. The current chapter sets out the concepts and methods I engaged with towards the historical research strand into the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War. It provides a holistic appreciation of this historical research process, or methodology. What follows is not solely focused on introducing and explaining the concepts and methods that were engaged with to obtain the research's findings, although these are important considerations. It also includes an elucidation of the issues and ideas surrounding the structuring of the study and the execution of the methods and the assumptions and beliefs which guided the accomplishment of the historical research and the generation of knowledge from the process.

This chapter explores the above over two substantive sections. The first section (3.2) sets out the relevant issues behind conducting the historical research and writing the study. It explores the chosen methods, and the concepts and ideas surrounding and informing them, to obtain source material and structure research findings. The second substantive section (3.3) sets out the research's design. It explores the particulars of the study, the different primary sources used and the method deployed to obtain information. It also surveys my theorised preconceptions and views which helped analyse the source material.

3.2 Research Concepts and Methods

3.2.1 Structuring the study

Case studies are an established method of structuring and presenting research. They can take interrelated issues and ideas, informed by one or more disciplinary perspectives, and present them in a distinct subject-specific

boundary. Many museum histories use case studies, even if this is not explicitly acknowledged. Abt 2001; Lewis 2005 and McTavish 2013 are three examples of single institutional case studies, whereas Mason 2007; Hill, Kate 2016 and Redman 2016 are three example of multi-institutional case studies. Even the Imperial War Museum, from the limited literature on it, has been subjected to case study through research in Condell 1985, Cundy 2015a and Wallis 2015.

There are many ways that case study research can be understood. Helena Harrison *et. al* (2017: para. 12) identify three often cited methodologists who have taken the approach and developed it to conform with their own ontological and epistemological ethics. These are Sharan B. Merriam, a pragmatic constructivist; Robert K. Yin, a realist–post-positivist; and Robert E. Stake, a relativist–constructivist/interpretivist (*ibid.*). Merriam (2009: p. 40) highlights the importance in case study research of delineating the object that is being researched. Yin (2014: pp. 16-17) underscores the importance of empirical rigour in producing research and conceptual open-mindedness and receptiveness in ascertaining the bounded case’s context. And Stake (1995: p. xi) stresses the importance of the critical interest which initially catalyses an investigation.

The reason case study research has become such a diverse and divergent approach is down to the heterogeneity of the researchers who use it (Harrison *et. al* 2017: para. 12). There are however various features that can be seen with any variation. In essence, a case study is a detailed study of a specific entity in its real life context. This could be an institution, organisation or museum, or some programme, project or policy thereof, etcetera. It entails a deep, detailed and bounded contemporary or historical analysis of the subject, including the subject’s impact on the surrounding physical and metaphysical purview, or *vice versa*. Where appropriate, this research involves multiple data gathering methods and interpretive frameworks. Helen Simons (2009: p. 21) contends that ultimately the rationale of any case study is to produce a detailed understanding of an entity or a thesis concerning some aspect thereof. In this regard, a historical case study can support or undermine a concept, argument or model by

showing whether the object at its centre does or does not comprise, embody or conform to a set of stated assumptions, structures and discourses.

The case study approach developed herein has been tailored towards producing an effective history of the Imperial War Museum, a historiographic approach previously discussed during chapter two (see section 2.4). As Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1992: pp. 20) explains, the idea behind effective museum history is to ‘select a specific time-frame and [...] identify all the various elements that together made up the identity of the “museum” at that particular time’. This coheres with the ideas underpinning case study research conceived, in one way or another, by Merriam (2009), Yin (2014) and Stake (1995), which are discussed below. Consequently, a case study approach is well suited to facilitating an effective history, for they are geared towards deriving meaning from what Stake (1995: p. 2) calls ‘a complex, functioning thing’. It is also particularly pertinent, so argues Yin (2014: p. 16), where the case context holds great informative value to the researcher, as with this study discussed below.

3.2.2 Sources in historical museum studies

Research on organisations and organisational experience can be conducted through analysing a variety of primary source types. This includes participant responses to questions posed by the researcher through questionnaires and interviews; detailed recordings from observation of real-life participant action and interaction, or simulation; and documentation produced by organisational actors conveying both qualitative and quantitative information (Bryman 1992: pp. 30-31). In principle, museum case studies are no exception. Yet the number of primary source types available when undertaking any case study research very much depends on factors deriving from the case context.

One significant factor in the availability of sources, if not the most significant, is a case study’s temporal setting, which can greatly curtail the source types available. Typically, case studies occurring after the events undergoing investigation, as with this case study, will rely on remnants from

those events for data. Such remnants usually comprise archival material in the form of heterogeneous documentation and texts (Lipartito 2015: p. 293), but not infrequently can also include memory in the form of oral history (Decker, Hassard and Rowlinson 2021: pp. 1137-1140). Unfortunately, no opportunities to draw on oral history presented themselves during this research, for the following two reasons. Firstly, no key actor from the case remained alive at the time. Indeed, the only known historical actor with an ability to comment as a witness was the first post-war Director-General, Noble Frankland, who held this position from 1960 to 1982 (see Frankland 1998), and who died before he could be approached for comment (Kennedy 2019). Even then, Frankland would not have spoken about most of the events under investigation, as he did not become involved in the museum until after the war. Secondly, no formal recordings of the memories of key actors has been found. The closest thing that meets this is a transcript reproducing oral testimony which the Director-General at the time provided the Parliamentary Committee of Public Accounts in 1957.

Accordingly, the data collection for the thesis was focussed on documentary sources of the historical events in relevant archives (Stanford 1994: p. 155).

Documentary sources encompass a broad range of source types that convey human thought and expression on occurrences in everyday life. They are records, which often convey information through the written word. Accordingly, documents have become synonymous with text-based artefacts. But they can comprise many other formats too (Scott 1990: pp. 10-18). This is because documents are representational items. As Suzanne Briet (2006: p. 10) has defined them, they may be formed of ‘any concrete indexical sign [*indice*], preserved or recorded towards the ends of representing, of reconstituting, or of providing a physical and intellectual phenomenon’. Accordingly, documentary sources include, but are not limited to, letters, reports and articles, drawings, photographs, films, audio tapes, etcetera (Clarkson 2003: pp. 80-81).

The documentary sources that are usually drawn on when researching museums are diverse and divergent, but collectively can detail both day-to-day

and long-term operations. Sammie L. Morris (2006: p. 3) outlines various types which fall under the definition provided by Briet (2006: p. 10). These include:

- policy and procedural documents, such as staff rotas, preventative conservation reports and public access statements;
- meeting minutes;
- institutional planning documents, such as organisational calendars, Gantt charts and critical path analyses;
- correspondence between staff, stakeholders and visitors;
- message books;
- non-textual documents, such as photographs, audio and film recording functions at the museum;
- legal documents, such as relevant legislation, bequests and contracts;
- grey literature, such as brochures, exhibition guides and collection catalogues;
- publicity documents, such as posters, leaflets and press releases;
- documents surrounding a building's maintenance, such as environmental monitoring checklists, contractor invoices and cleaning schedules; and
- architectural plans (Morris 2006: p. 3).

A range of documentary sources were researched for the present study, their content, selection, method and rationale being detailed below. They predominantly comprised text-based artefacts, such as correspondence, memoranda, meeting minutes and reports. Individually, each of these subtypes have unique informative qualities which together help paint a detailed picture of an object of study. Correspondence, such as letters, telegrams and other private messages, reveal personal perspectives and insights into the information that their author-senders wanted others to be aware about. Moreover, correspondence is sent in both an official capacity and unofficial capacity. This means that they can convey not only the issues and ideas that help maintain some formal and official perspective on something, but also the issues and ideas which exist behind that representation. Memoranda offer much the same as correspondence

in terms of information. A memorandum however is usually used as an internal communication method to multiple individuals. Accordingly, memoranda are rarely informal, meaning that they usually pose as official documents. Meeting minutes and reports comprise other sources of official information. Meeting minutes provide formal records of what is discussed in meetings. As such, they can inform on the decision-making process that goes into directing projects and establishing positionalities and policies. Reports, by contrast, provide formal information, generally to support business continuity, which can inform decision-making over projects, positionalities and policies.

3.2.3 Museums as repositories of historical sources

Historical documentary sources are usually found in organised bodies. These *archives* typically comprise documents that have been retained for their long-term evidential value to the individuals, communities or organisations which created them (International Council on Archives 2016). There exists growing recognition around the museum sector of the critical role museum archives can play supporting organisational continuity (Deiss 1984: pp. 8-11; Baeza Ruiz 2018: p. 174). Accordingly, many museums now maintain archives. This feature is not a recent phenomenon, but rather one developed over years. That the archive of the Imperial War Museum/IWM, for example, stretches back to the institution's foundation in 1917 demonstrates the tendance's longevity. This shows that archives are not necessarily created with research in mind.

An archive's composition will vary depending on the institution and the aims and objectives they have for it. The amount of resources, both human and financial, made available to the archive is also a significant factor. In keeping with Catherine Pearson's (2017: p. 11) observations on British national museum archives, the archive at IWM was fully catalogued and professionally maintained, making research there relatively straightforward. This frequently contrasts with the archives of local authority or independent museums, which,

through other priorities and/or limited human and financial resources, have often taken a much less systematic approach to preserving their records (*ibid.*).

Despite its professional upkeep, use of the archive at IWM posed various challenges. The first stemmed from the archive's historically constructed nature. Archives are not naturally occurring entities. Rather, they are the product of human concern for an informed future. People possess personal assumptions, perceptions and prejudices about the social system and its subsystems, which imbue the activities they pursue therein. As such, archives tend to embody the assumptions, perceptions and prejudices held by their creators, or convey sentiments that the creators consciously or subconsciously wanted passed on through the archival process. Moreover, the set resources which often constrain archival activities will likely fillip the presentation of this axiology.

Accordingly, as Aleida Assmann (2011: p. 337) affirms: 'They are in no way all-inclusive but have their own structural mechanisms for exclusion'.

Throughout the period under consideration, the vast majority of the documents that constituted the archive came from three white males in elite positions – a politician and two veterans of the armed forces from the officer class – who at different times held the posts of Director-General, Curator and Secretary (IWM n.y.f: p. 1). This unsurprisingly will have shaped the archive, as cultural and political pressures are just as constitutive to archival formation as accident and serendipity (Dever, Vickery and Newman 2009: pp. 9-10). The greatest symptom from its development is the presence of silences. There are several ways these silences emerge in archives. Each derive from the exertion of hegemonic power over the marginalised or persecuted (Carter 2006: p. 217). One way is through the deliberate suppression of manifest voices in a way that Miriam Meyerhoff (2004: p. 210) describes as 'simple and perfect [...]: the utterance [...] is never born'. This transpires when hegemonic power prevents voices from being heard. But as Rodney G. S. Carter (2006: p. 219) also points out, silence does not necessarily 'equal muteness', which leads onto a second way that silences occur: through the delegitimisation of marginalised groups and

of their ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies (Harris 2002: p. 150). This transpires when hegemonic power preferentially treats documents that support the hegemonic order. And a third way that silences occur arise when marginalised groups distance themselves from hegemonic processes (Miller 1996: p. 157). In this instance, the presence of silence is not the result of structural mechanisms for exclusion *per se*, but of resistance against the hegemonic order and its efforts to control the nature of record and memory.

The second challenge concerned the way that the archive is configured, which made precise, targeted searches quite difficult. Today, archives are ideally arranged with the intention of facilitating the search for information to answer questions (see Carmicheal 2012). Historically, however, there existed a view in European archival institutions that documents should be kept together as per their creator's configuration (Hamill 2017: p. 1). Alongside being structures that suppress individuals, communities and ideas therefore, archives can be constructed around prevailing modes of knowledge and understanding which do not always persist as time passes (Walsham 2016: pp. 30-35). The archive at IWM appears to continue this earlier canon. For example, there are two main groupings of material for the years covering this thesis: EN1 and EN2 (IWM n.y.f; IWM n.y.g). The former predominantly concerns the First World War and interwar years, and the latter the Second World War and immediate post war years, although there is also some overlap between the two. In these groupings, material was further grouped into broad categories such as 'Imperial War Museum', 'Staff', 'Visitors' and 'Enquiries', to name but a few. Some categories could be found replicated in both EN1 and EN2 groupings, while others were unique. On occasion, one category from one particular grouping bore striking similarity to another category from another grouping, such as 'Museums and Galleries' in EN1 – which contained no specific folders about any art museums – and 'Museums, Other' in EN2. Moreover, the broadness of the categories meant that many held documents which could also easily be held by another, such as those concerning the Imperial War Museum and the Office/Ministry of

Works. This suggests that what once may have been obvious and important distinctions in the archive are not so obvious or important any more. The upshot was a need for an awareness about the museum's historical conception, foundation and development to try and appreciate the significance of the categories under which preserved documentation had been collated.

The third challenge came about from missing or mislaid documents, an issue which frequently plagues archives, including museum archives (Loughney 2006: p. 51). This arose at several points over the research process, preventing what appeared to be important sources from being consulted. The issue became exacerbated when the archive and library started being removed from IWM London for long-term storage at IWM Duxford. This meant that sources eventually had to be transported between venues whenever requested. At least one important source – the 1947 edition of *A Short Guide to the Imperial War Museum* – became mislaid through the process. Supported by the previous two examples, this challenge exemplifies how no archive comprises an exhaustive knowledge bank on the themes and topics considered therein. Neither therefore do they comprise a complete set of data. This meant that the museum archive possessed gaps in the information that might have been present. Consequently, a degree of interpretation became needed on top of the extant documentation to fill them (Lipartito 2015: pp. 295-296). It required a critique of the archive's knowledge, which drew on personal observations informed by wider study and the prevailing standards in historical and conceptual thought.

3.3 Adopted Research Design

3.3.1 The particulars of the case study

This study has a delineated analytical purview. In line with Merriam's (2009: pp. 40-43) central view that case study research must converge on a 'bounded system', its focus is fixed on a specific subject, situated in a set time frame and spatial area. Together, each dimension makes up the case's ambit. Within this bounded system, the study examines the holistic operations of/in the name of the

Imperial War Museum. Such elements include the daily interactions between staff, activities undertaken towards projects, management practices, and exchanges and collaborations with other organisations such as museums and government departments. It also examines the ideas articulated by staff. In doing so, the study demonstrates what Merriam identifies as the particularistic, descriptive and heuristic qualities of case study research (*ibid.*: pp. 43-44). This means that it focuses on a particular phenomenon; provides a broad, deep description thereof; and creates new meaning about the phenomenon.

The case's time-frame spans the years 1933-1950, which has been termed herein as the Second World War *era*. This begins with the rise of fascism in Germany and ends at the start of the Cold War. The phase from 1933 to 2 September 1939 is when the Imperial War Museum undertook its preparations for the situation produced by an armed conflict, all the while hoping that these preparations would never be needed. From 3 September 1939 to 8 May 1945 is when the Imperial War Museum had to manage such a situation. And from 9 May 1945 to 1950 is when the Imperial War Museum recovered from the direct impacts of armed conflict. Largely however the study's analysis concentrates specially on the actual war years and the first post-war year, 1939-1946.

The case's spatial areas are the spaces controlled by the Imperial War Museum or wherein it was represented at any given point throughout the Second World War era. These include spaces such as the Imperial War Museum's main building, sites away from the main building which the institution used for storage and places where the institution engaged with actors not directly connected therewith. It was also deemed important to allow for wider historical phenomena influencing the actors or events connected to IWM to be included in the analysis. Consequently, relevant influences, both institutions and individuals, beyond the case are incorporated where appropriate.

3.3.2 *The sources available*

There was a substantial amount of primary source material available from the period with which to inform the case study. These included unpublished documentation, grey literature, and publications such as periodicals and newspapers. To Yin (2014: pp. 16-17), a rich empirical data set is imperative for case study research. This stems from what he considers to be the ‘logic of design’ of case study research: developing the most holistic understanding of a case as possible (*ibid.*). The most important primary sources used herein were letters and other written correspondence, meeting minutes and reports and accounts. Written correspondence provided viewpoints over the museum and the war and the latter’s impact on the former. Meeting minutes helped ascertain the aims and objectives of the Imperial War Museum on dealing with the impacts and implications posed by the Second World War. Moreover, the copies preserved in the archives often comprised drafts annotated with amendments. This meant that the minutes could also provide additional, pre-approved perspectives on what had been discussed in the meetings, offering unofficial insights as well. And reports and accounts provided information which combined attributes from both meeting minutes and written correspondence. The information could be helpful in ascertaining the aims and objectives of the museum. Yet on the other hand their authors sometimes included personal reflections with the document’s text. Accounts and reports could therefore comprise a nuanced source with potential to be read from multiple angles.

For insights into the wider historical context, the study drew on publications from the time period such as the *Museums Journal* and national and local newspapers, such as the *Times* and the *Illustrated London News*. The *Museums Journal* was particularly valuable. It provided a sector-wide perspective on museum work during the Second World War era which helped to interpret decision making at the Imperial War Museum over the period.

The most important source consulted was the unpublished *War History of the Imperial War Museum*. Comprising two volumes, this grey literature

provides a first-hand account of the Imperial War Museum's activities over the Second World War era. Volume one covers the years 1933-1943, while volume two covers 1944-1946. It was commissioned by the War Cabinet in 1942 towards a monograph on the national museums and galleries during the Second World War for the state backed multi-volume official history about the conflict.¹ Split into three sub-series with one pertaining to military matters, a second to civil matters and a third to medical matters, this official history covers many and varied subjects concerning the British national military, social, economic and scientific experience over 1939-1945 and the surrounding years (Dennis *et. al* 2009). Ninety volumes were originally planned (Higham 1964: p. 240), with ninety-two eventually being published (Dennis *et. al* 2009). But none would ever comprise one on the national museums and galleries.

The *War History of the Imperial War Museum* is reflective and written predominantly from the third person. Although not credited to an author, a textual analysis of the source and a review of the documentation surrounding its production suggests that the author was the Director-General of the Imperial War Museum at the time. The war history conveys many valuable insights. These can be used to verify the information conveyed by other primary sources, or to fill gaps in the narrative where those other sources are silent or do not exist. Indeed, when studied for the thesis, it demonstrated the same if not greater informative value as the institution's annual reports produced from 1917 until the Second World War. This is because the detail provided by the war history about the operational experience of the museum far exceeded that by the annual reports, which predominantly focussed on reporting activities and providing lists of collection items which had been accessioned during the relevant year. Various copies exist in both the IWM's library and museum archive.

¹ IWM, Museum Archive (MA), EN2/1/MUS/001/1, typed memorandum, 'For the Directors' Conference', 11 November 1942.

All this primary source material derived from a range of organisations. Unsurprisingly, the vast majority came from the Imperial War Museum, and therein from the Director-General. Yet several other organisations also had prominent responsibility for their production. The Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries was one such organisation. Established in 1931 out of the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries, the Standing Commission comprised a *quasi*-autonomous governmental organisation responsible for advising the government on all matters pertaining to the national museums and galleries (Carlisle 1991). It dealt with various war-related matters during the Second World War. These included safeguarding measures throughout the conflict, plans for reopening afterwards, and the distribution of exhibition material arising from the conflict to interested national museums and galleries. Although founded with no power of enforcement *per se*, the Standing Commission became heavily influential in forming government policy. Documents deriving from this organisation therefore comprised key sources.

Another organisation from which primary source material derived was the Museums Association. Established in 1889 to represent the interests of museums and galleries and promote the sector's professional development, it focussed its attention during the Second World War on supporting provincial museums (Lewis 1989). Accordingly, archival documents from this organisation were deemed less important in this research project than those from the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries. That said, as publisher of the *Museums Journal*, sources by the Museums Association have nevertheless comprised a valuable resource providing important information towards this thesis.

Government departments also had responsibility for producing some primary source material. The most important of these was the Treasury, being the department responsible for overseeing the institution under the *Imperial War Museum Act* 1920. This is followed by the Office of Works, reformed in 1940 as the Ministry of Works, which maintained public buildings. Three others were the War Office, Admiralty and Air Ministry: the civilian departments overseeing

the army, navy and air force respectively. Primary sources deriving from these particular organisations attained the highest level of importance.

This thesis therefore has been evidenced by various primary sources from multiple points of origin. Even so, there were unsurprising silences in IWM's archive which must be addressed before proceeding further. Extensive research uncovered no insightful documentation that could be confidently attributed to those employed by the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War, other than the Director-General, his curatorial assistant, the Librarian, and the Trustees. The upshot to this was that an entire tranche of perspectives would remain unconsidered throughout the study, perspectives which may, had they been discovered, have greatly increased understanding surrounding the situation there. Possible reasons for the silence can be found in archival theory discussed above and also personal experience. Aside from possessing the 'structural mechanisms for exclusion' (Assmann 2011: p. 337) that may have limited what was admitted into the archive, my own experience of employment at IWM Duxford as a Museum Assistant suggests there may have been few occasions where low-end staff needed to produce any writing for their work. It is entirely possible little, if any, such documentation existed in the first place.

3.3.3 Generating information from the sources

Making a case meaningful relies on analysis and interpretation of primary sources. As Stake (1995) explains, this is a fundamentally crucial ability in case study research. It occurs, he states, through a process of 'giving meaning to first impressions': by assessing what the gathered data implies, how one unit of data correlates with another unit of data, the apparent significance of the data that appears, etcetera (*ibid.*: p. 71). This is achieved through situating and assessing units of data against and synthesising the impression derived from them with personal experience, defined broadly: including ontological, epistemological and axiological preconceptions, other units of data from the research and the findings from other research projects (*ibid.*: pp. 72). It involves anatomising the

objects under analysis in different ways, and then reassembling them back together after each breakdown in ways that make the objects more meaningful (*ibid.*: p. 75). The end result is the ability to make critical observations of these objects which go on to inform our understanding of the case (*ibid.*: pp. 76-77).

As the focus of this chapter is the practical issues, ideas and process involved in obtaining, analysing and structuring the research data used towards the thesis, there exists no scope here to include detailed discussion on the theoretical framework adopted for interpreting the primary sources. Such considerations would require an entire chapter, unbalancing the thesis while offering little additional relevant context. There is however merit in briefly surveying my theorised preconceptions and views on the basis for society's support and protection of museums. This was a major consideration when analysing and interpreting the primary sources used towards the study.

Museums and the understanding of what a museum is, and is for, have undergone significant development over the years. In the European and particularly British context, this is development from the exclusive cabinets of curiosities of the sixteenth century to the multifunctional public service providers of today (Bennett 1995; Gray 2008). Through doing so, museums have behaved as many organisations have done, by evolving their *raison d'être* and rationales, altering their professional practices, and broadening out their user-bases as the socio-political context changed (Bucheli and Kim 2015: pp. 252-256). Accordingly, an important trait has persisted with them to a greater or lesser extent. This is a view that museums are a 'good thing': that they are worthwhile institutions. Put another way, that they are legitimate. Legitimacy is the sociological phenomenon of being somehow correct, desirable and relevant to individuals and society (Suchman 1995). All institutions and organisations rely on legitimacy for their subsistence (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975; Buchanan 2018) and museums are no exception (Gray 2015: pp. 18-23). Over their history, museums have been held by their proponents and advocates, whether these be private owners or backers, policy makers or the visiting public, or any

combination thereof, as forces towards personal or societal good (Scott 2016). Examples include conveying prestige within small elite social circles during the eighteenth century (Bennett 1995 pp. 26-27), educating populations on their civic responsibilities during the early twentieth century (Pearson 2017 pp. 25-26) as Foucauldian technologies of power (Hetherington 2015: p. 28; see Foucault 1979), or dispensing public services during the early twenty-first century (Gray 2008) under rampant neoliberalism (Ranter 2019: pp. 65-66).

These preconceptions and views derive from the understanding that legitimacy greatly underpins the survival of museums in general. It is a key factor behind their continuing existence. More importantly, it is a key stimulus for their protection (Bucheli and Kim 2015: p. 252). There are numerous instances of this from recent history, where proponents have intervened or otherwise tried to prevent museums from being eliminated. One example can be seen with the with the Detroit Institute of Arts in Michigan, United States. This museum came under threat of closure due to unsustainable funding cuts during 2013 when the city of Detroit went bankrupt. Local residents however perceived sufficient value in the museum that they purchased it from the city's authorities, saving the museum from liquidation (Abt 2017). A second example can be seen through the numerous instances of work undertaken by institutional, local and national authorities to protect museums from natural disaster, theft and general degradation, as represented by the heterogeneous literature on such matters from the sector and academic field (see, for example, Jones 1986; International Council of Museums and International Committee on Museum Security 1993; Knell 1994). And a third example can be seen with the creation and ratification of International Humanitarian Law by national governments which helps protect museums and other cultural property during armed conflict (O'Keefe 2006).

3.3.4 Checking the sources validity

Before critical observations can be made of objects of analysis, however, the data informing them must be extracted from their sources. The method by which

data was obtained to inform this historical research comprised a two-stage process of critical evaluation. The first involved inspecting the documentary sources which had been found. This was on one hand to confirm their authenticity, and on the other to record the information they contained. The former included analysing the document's medium, author and presentation of the type or handwriting (Stanford 1994 p. 154). The latter, by contrast, was accomplished using photographic equipment (Redman 2013: pp. 15-21).

The second stage involved critically reviewing the information collected to determine its validity. Yin (2014: pp. 118-123) believes such a process comprises an important aspect of the empirical ethic of case study research. Aside from expanding on the issues which can be addressed, thereby increasing the study's holisticness, it fosters confidence in the research findings. The process can be described as an interrogation of the researcher's assumptions, which become subject to critique and questioning. It is informed by the practice called *triangulation*, specifically *within-method triangulation*. This involves the use of multiple different but complementary varieties of the same method (Denzin 1978: p. 340). The process exposed whether the resulting understanding about the sources disrupted or confirmed what they already knew about the case, and were trustworthy or untrustworthy based on the material's provenance.

3.4 Chapter Conclusion

As a historical museum study on the ways that crises disrupt museums, the methodology underlying this thesis brings together various practical concepts and research methods. The result is an original synthesis of approaches, facilitating an investigation that explores how museums respond to crisis. This background chapter has established the study's historical research process. It considers the collection of data, the analysis of information extracted from the data, and the structuration of findings which the information embodied.

The original documents towards this thesis comprised the raw materials of the study. Encompassing manifold types, they were gateways to understanding

the case on which the study is founded. The act of attending the relevant archives personally or virtually and examining the available holdings resulted in relevant sources being discovered from which original knowledge and ideas could be drawn. Their subsequent processing via interpretation and critical examination then generated the necessary information to construct the case.

The case study approach comprised a method of arranging the information extracted from the primary sources. In this sense it provided the structural framework for the study. By guiding and limiting the study's purview, the approach enabled a close examination and rich delineation of the facts, issues and ideas under consideration. Concurrently, it brought meaning to the findings by incorporating mechanisms for auditing and reading the sources.

Having explored the concepts and methods that enabled this study to uncover what was believed could be discoverable about the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era, the thesis next explores the framing concepts which drove the critical focus of the study. These are the analytical tools that point out linkages and associations between different units of analysis, fostering deeper meaning than might otherwise be apparent individually.

Chapter 4 Analysis of Key Concepts

4.1 Chapter Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the concepts and methods that helped me uncover what I believed could be discovered about the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era. This chapter introduces the concepts which helped me frame the study: institutions, organisations and museums; crisis and crisis management; resilience; and reinvention. As discussed in chapter one (see subsection 1.3.1), framing concepts are used to identify connections, relationships and greater meaning between various different events (Maclean, Harvey and Clegg 2016: p. 624). They structure a researcher's interpretation and understanding of the primary source material worked on, making visible what is not immediately apparent from them. In using framing concepts, this thesis deploys what David A. Snow *et al.* (1986) term *frame amplification* and *frame bridging*. The first establishes an 'interpretive frame that bears on a particular issue, problem or set of events' (*ibid.* p. 469). This kind of framing clarifies 'the meaning of events and their connection to one's immediate life situation' (*ibid.*). The second involves the 'linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem' (*ibid.* p. 467). This framing draws links between different but relatable issues and ideas. Through undertaking the above, the chapter helps address aim four, objective one; aim five, objective one; and aim six, objective one of this study.

This chapter explores the above over five substantive sections. The first substantive section (4.2), on institutions, organisations and museums, sets out the conceptual contexts of the present study. Beginning with institutionalism, the chapter then explores organisationalism, and finally investigates the museum as an idea. Through this, it considers how organisations exist in the institutional context. It also explores the museum as an institution and organisation. The second substantive section (4.3) builds and expounds on crisis already introduced in chapter two, the first of two principle framing concepts

underpinning this thesis. It explores crisis as an abstract concept, factoring issues and ideas drawn from the previous section on institutions, organisations and museums. This involves considering the term's background, the different readings of crisis, crisis in both theory and practice, and the concept's historicisation. It also involves providing a definition. Expounding the concept further, the third substantive section (4.4) on crisis management sets out links between crisis and institutional organisations such as museums by establishing the way organisations approach the management of crisis. This involves introducing crisis management frameworks, and identifying the specific framework that has been adopted to help analyse the process. The fourth substantive section (4.5) sets out an important organisational quality that is essential for any museum undertaking crisis management: resilience to adversity. Although conceptually independent from crisis management, resilience bears significantly on the management of crises. In doing so, alongside introducing resilience, this section further develops the previous two sections by establishing what crisis is and is not. Finally, throughout the fifth substantive section (4.6) on reinvention, the chapter sets out the thesis's second principle framing concept which under certain circumstances can comprise a strategy of crisis management. It begins by introducing reinvention, and then introduces how reinvention can be analysed in the organisational context.

4.2 Institutions, Organisations and Museums

4.2.1 Institutions

Institutions are complex concepts. They comprise social structures created by society to guide, influence or control the way society operates and generates knowledge and understanding, as well as structures which perpetuate societal behaviour (Ferguson 2013). Three examples of institutions might include national and cultural narratives, curricula and legal frameworks. In other words, institutions help define the social system. They achieve this by forming the social system's composite elements and then by pulling them together (Scott *et*

al. 1994: p. 68). This means institutions can have influence over the direction of societies (Ferguson 2013). And yet, they are not all-powerful. Institutions still depend on two factors for their ability to direct social conduct.

The first factor is human interaction. While institutions comprise words, ideas and for some even bricks and mortar, only through people's engagement with them do they impact on the social system (Hallett and Ventresca 2006: p. 215). To use Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1991: p. 93) analogy, institutions may exist in human conception and physical structures, but they are effectively 'dead' unless 'ongoingly brought to life in actual human conduct' by being actively used, followed or populated. The second is societal authorisation or, as discussed in chapter three (see subsection 3.3.3), legitimacy (Buchanan 2018). Through constituting a metaphorical engine for the dissemination of rules and norms deriving from society's cultural beliefs, institutions require legitimisation by society, which may sometimes be acquiescently given, to assume such a role. It is this implicit agreement between institution and society which gives them their power. For that reason, just as society's cultural beliefs will cease to exist unless energised by institutions, institutions will cease to exist unless permitted by society to enact its cultural beliefs (Sewell 1992: p. 13).

4.2.2 Organisations

Organisations are systemic entities created to help individuals or other organisations realise aims and objectives in an environment dominated by set cultural beliefs (North 1990: pp. 3-5). Accordingly, whereas national and cultural narratives, curricula and legal frameworks might comprise three examples of institutions, three examples of organisations might comprise museums, schools and colleges and law courts. The distinction between institutions and organisations can be subject to debate, with overlap observable between the two (March, Friedberg and Arellano 2011). This is acknowledged by Elias L. Khalil (1995: p. 449), who states that: 'The organization/institution demarcation is certainly tenuous'. If somebody was to draw a distinction

between the two however, he asserts that the distinction should be based on the difference between ‘ends and means’. Indeed, Khalil postulates that organisations are defined by their ends. Institutions, he continues, are defined by their means (*ibid.*). Consequently, it can be argued that organisations are established to perform specific, preconceived purposes, whereas institutions set the terms and conditions by which organisational purpose is achieved.

4.2.3 Organisations in the institutional context

To maintain legitimacy (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975), organisations should manage themselves so that their aims, objectives and performances are consistent with the values of the social system in which they operate (Buchanan and Huczynski 2017: pp. 8-9). As human need modifies following environmental and social change (Francisconi 2009: p. 305), organisations must follow by renewing their offer. Those which cannot meet human need become redundant and will invariably collapse in the fullness of time (Jones 2001: p. 2), their legitimacy diminished. Yet, just as organisations are potentially impacted by changes to the social system, so too is the social system, indeed the lived environment, potentially impacted by the operations of an organisation. The societal-organisational power projection does not always flow one-way (Crowther and Green 2004: pp. 85-87), meaning that legitimacy can be gained, or repaired, as well as lost (Kuruppu, Milne and Tilt 2019). As with institutions therefore, organisations are simultaneously slave to and master of the proceedings and attributes constituting the social system. This necessitates a discussion here on where organisations feature in the institutional context.

Considerable disagreement exists on the issue of where organisations feature in the institutional context. W. Richard Scott (2014: pp. 182-183) identifies three different viewpoints from existing published research. The first, posited by Douglas North (1990), advances the idea that organisations constitute institutionalised agents in a social system created and dictated by external institutional entities. The second, posited by Philip Selznick (1984) and Oliver

E. Williamson (1975; 1985; 1993), advances the idea that organisations themselves, conversely, constitute institutional actors arising from the decision making of their organisational agents. Both these viewpoints make important contributions to the discourse surrounding the relationships between organisations and institutionalism and offer compelling arguments.

Yet according to other researchers, it appears that the ideas posited by North (1990), Selznick (1984) and Williamson (1975; 1985; 1993) only tell half the story. In practice, as Staffan Furusten (2013: pp. 65-78) demonstrates through discussing the transmission of institutional ideas from individuals and organisations to other organisations, organisations adapt with and influence the institutional environment. This falls under the third and seemingly most rounded viewpoint, posited by researchers such as John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan (1977), Lynne G. Zucker (1983) and Frank R. Dobbin (1994), which advances the idea that organisations constitute both an institutional and institutionalised entity, where its structure and operation is influenced and also geared towards sustaining the cultural beliefs pervading the lived environment. As John Child (2005: p. 399) explains: ‘We always have to bear in mind that while the organization we have reflects our wider society, organization in turn also shapes the kind of society in which we live’. Accordingly, organisations should not be considered entirely free actors. Yet neither should they be considered agents deprived of all autonomy. Organisations are free to operate and impact on the social system, but with constraints. These constraints are society’s norms, rules and beliefs that create the conditions of the social system: conditions which organisations must accommodate in their structure, procedures and goals. Consequently, it is conceivable that organisations do comprise an institution, but one with greater restrictions and limitations on them than intangible institutions.

4.2.4 Museums

It could be said that museums are amongst the most impactful organisational institutions developed by civil societies. This is argued because on one hand

museums inform, educate and entertain people through different activities, and comprise a means for individual and communal definition and representation. They do so through collecting and presenting the human and natural world. By performing such work, museums project ideas and ideologies, take sides over issues, and convey messages both domestically and internationally (Mason, Robinson and Coffield 2018: pp. 39-41). Yet their impact is not just on cultural matters. It also extends to social and economic matters. Although falling outwith their traditional remit, there are various case studies which show convincingly that museums can be tools for urban regeneration and fiscal growth in deprived communities (Plaza and Haarich 2009; Tuck and Dickinson 2015). The relocation of the Imperial War Museum to the slums of Lambeth just south of the River Thames over 1935-1936 presents such an example of this potential for museums (Cooke and Jenkins 2001). On the other hand, museums are regular and increasing features in the landscape across the developed world (Lord, Barry 2001: p. 11). In the United Kingdom for example, many cities, towns and even villages possess some museum-like institution, either representing the local area or pertaining to other non-geographically specific subject (see Watson 2007).

There exists considerable disagreement amongst museum professionals, the visiting public and academics over what comprises a museum today. This is because museums no longer conform to an archetype that fits all national and regional contexts. Rather, they are diverse and divergent institutions that take various forms in broad and loose discursive parameters (Hooper-Greenhill 1992: p. 1). Through developing from private collections of physical objects, to public facilities which preserve and present physical and intangible collections, and even historical buildings and whole landscapes, museums have become heterogeneous, multifaceted institutions (Ambrose and Pain 2018: pp. 9-11).

The controversy arising from the recently proposed definition for museums by the International Council of Museums (Haynes 2019; Noce 2020; Kendall Adams 2021), formally unveiled at its twenty-fifth General Conference in September 2019 (Fraser 2019: p. 501), shows their diversity and divergency:

Museums are democratising, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people.

Museums are not for profit. They are participatory and transparent, and work in active partnership with and for diverse communities to collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit, and enhance understandings of the world, aiming to contribute to human dignity and social justice, global equality and planetary wellbeing.

(International Council of Museums 2019)

As John Fraser (2019: p. 502) explains, today, museums the world over vary so much in their social, political and economic contexts that this new definition potentially ‘undermines the understanding of the affordances of the [museum] form or how the form might be misused but still constitute a museum’. This exemplifies what David Lowenthal identified in 2009 as an emerging sense of doubt amongst museums about what museums are, and are for, as they diversify.

To attain such heterogeneity, many museums have undergone what Kenneth Hudson (1998: p. 48) calls ‘a revolution [...] in museum philosophy and in its practical applications’. Indeed, in Western English speaking countries, this stems from not just gradual development, where museums make incremental changes that ensure they remain aligned with the social system (Black 2021a). It also stems from what Simon J. Knell, Suzanne MacLeod and Sheila Watson (2007a: p. xix) describe as a revolutionary predisposition, where museums – or rather, museum staff – reject their prevailing and projected *status quos* in favour of alternative and more desirable futures. Indeed, the premise of

Knell, MacLeod and Watson's (2007b) compendium *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Change and Are Changed* is that there can be no certainty to museum development. The concept exists in an unpredictable state of flux, its historical course offering few insights about the prospects for museum futures, other than demonstrating their tenaciousness at seeking out new sustainable models and, ultimately, the legitimacy to continue existing and performing their services.

4.3 Crisis

4.3.1 Defensive and revolutionary meanings of crisis

The main thrust of this thesis is an analysis of the work performed by the Imperial War Museum over the Second World War era. Its intention is to understand how the museum dealt with the difficult situations posed during the conflict, and whether they ultimately comprised crises. This section therefore introduces and elucidates the concept of *crisis*. In doing so, it includes not only some consideration of what the term crisis means, but also what is signified when systemic entities are declared in crisis, how those entities respond to the threat, and the way crisis can be deployed historiographically.

Over its etymological development, the word crisis has acquired meaning informed by classical legal, theological and medical origins. A dualistic application for the word followed. This arose from extensive adaption through acquiring multiple meanings from people's continual engagement with the associated concept (Hall 2013: pp. 9-10). In one use, crisis evolved to describe the condition of some uncertain origin which requires judgment against pre-existing knowledge (Koselleck 2006: pp. 358-360). In another use, it evolved to mark the moment when a body, both organism and politic, arrives at some conceived health condition that is either restored or deteriorates until their death (Motherby 1791; Martin 2015; Milstein 2015: p. 144). Viewed together, these uses generally signpost situations which fit with conceptions about the modern world where actual or metaphorical salvation or damnation, or health or disease and death of something is brought into question (Koselleck 2006: p. 161).

While undergoing this development, several useful approaches to reading crisis have emerged. The first is a defensive reading. This occurs where the body has been identified as being confined to two arbitrary conditions of health or sickness. Brian Milstein (2015: p. 145) points to the message in Thomas Hobbes' (1651) *Leviathan* for a clear example, even though Hobbes himself never used the term: 'restricted to the guideposts of a "healthy" or "sick" commonwealth, the political imagination of the *Leviathan* remained limited to the oppositions between peace and war, stability and chaos, perseverance and decay'. But during this time, as evidenced by *Leviathan* itself, the modern idea that society comprised some self-aware entity capable of achieving continual progress was emerging, influencing the way crisis would later be understood.

Around one hundred years later, crisis began representing a breaking point in the *status quo* and transitional phase between two states. Such ideas are seen at this time through the essays entitled *The American Crisis* by American philosopher Thomas Paine (1776: para. 13) written over the revolutionary war:

By perseverance and fortitude, we have the prospect of a glorious issue; by cowardice and submission, the sad choice of a variety of evils – a ravaged country – a depopulated city – habitations without safety, and slavery without hope – our homes turned into barracks and bawdy-houses for Hessians, and a future race to provide for, whose fathers we shall doubt of.

Reinhart Koselleck (2006: p. 372) therefore views crisis hereon as embodying a 'structural signature of modernity', the concept of modernity resting heavily on the presumption of continual progress in society (Mouzakitis 2017).

Consequently, crisis also established connotations with revolution and liberation: where pressure from stagnation and oppression have hit some tipping point, resulting in the *status quo* being replaced (Milstein 2015: p. 145). This understanding informed Karl Marx's ideas on economic crisis. In Marxist

thinking, the capitalist system is riddled with contradictions. These inevitably entail the decreasing profitability of industry. To restore profitability, the bourgeois owning classes must degrade the proletariat workers' employment conditions. A vicious cycle then ensues. Further inevitable depreciation prompts further employment degradations. This persists, conceivably until the proletariat's total impoverishment, whereupon the cycle implodes through their violent overthrow of the bourgeois (Johnson, Walker and Gray 2014).

4.3.2 Crisis in theoretical understanding

Crisis becomes significant when a museum or other organisational entity has been declared to inhabit such situations. This is because its meaning indicates changes in the condition of the impacted entity. To declare a crisis requires more than a fully theorised definition. It also requires what Christopher Whitehead *et al.* (2019: p. 2) call 'a set of interlinked structural and discursive phenomena' which Milstein (2015: p. 147) states are 'a range of claims, comments, and attitudes regarding our relation as a collective "us" to a "not-us around us" upon which our everyday life depends'. To declare a crisis is to take a critical stance on conditions derived from perceptions about relationships with the social system. Relationships that can be recognised by all impacted actors, who also recognise broadly the proposed resolution. As such, an understanding of what crisis is requires more than an understanding of what crisis means. It also requires an understanding of what crisis needs to bring about social impact.

The nature of these structural and discursive phenomena is established by Milstein (2015: pp. 147-152) over four specific crisis components. They comprise a crisis' context, object, resolution and community. The first component is the crisis *context*, the stimulus in which crisis arises. It stems from a perception about the social system as falling into contradiction with expected or desired norms. This subjectivity surrounding crisis can be likened to that surrounding dirt, which Mary Douglas (1966: p. 35) theorised as 'matter out of place'. The second component is the crisis *object*, the thing which inhabits

crisis. It could be a physical or metaphysical object, but must uphold some aspect of the social system, such as a museum or other organisation. The third component is the crisis *resolution*, the condition which the crisis conscious believe that the museum must reach to escape its crisis. Without the conception of a resolution, there can be no crisis. And the fourth is the crisis *community*, individuals in the social system who collectively conceive and spread perceptions of crisis. Crises need communities to exist. They identify and strive to rectify whatever discontinuity has created them. Membership can be defined by or outwith geographical boundaries. It may also cut across established groupings both political and social, and vary in size depending on the crisis situation, much like museum communities (Watson 2007). Crisis communities come into existence when an individual makes a crisis declaration which is replicated by others. In doing so, the other individuals licence themselves and their fellow crisis community members to speak authoritatively about the crisis: what it signifies and what the resolution would be. This gives the crisis bearing.

These components show that crisis not only potentiates a definition for disruption to systemic entities. It also comprises a concept for making sense about the social system and articulating discomfort arising from developments. Consequently, crisis represents on one-hand symptoms of unpredictability, instability and potential danger, and on the other, an alarm or rallying cry to warn others against those symptoms, preventing them from causing perceived harm. In short, it is a means of analysing and negotiating the social system.

4.3.3 Crisis in practical understanding

Crises define and warn of situations in the social system that are unstable, unpredictable and potentially dangerous, and therefore unsettling for the inhabitants which experience them. A challenge in understanding crisis however is that there are many conceivable occurrences which could inspire such unsettlement, but not all of which could constitute crises as theorised above. Rather, some will constitute *routine emergencies*. Complicating matters, crises

and routine emergencies are not fixed to certain typologies of events. It depends on their context. Museums and other organisations are susceptible to both crises and routine emergencies. What in one context might constitute some routine emergency for a museum could in another constitute crisis. It is prudent, therefore, to try and set crises apart from routine emergencies.

The main differences between crises and routine emergencies are established by Shari R. Veil (2013: p. 845). They stem from the disparity in their regularity and the anticipation surrounding them. Routine emergencies are anticipated. They happen regularly, follow familiar patterns and are expected. Michele Wucker (2016) defined such events as ‘gray rhinos [*sic*]’, a metaphor for big, obvious and not unexpected dangers. Accordingly, the respective individuals tasked with managing the situation will have been trained to deal with them proactively following set yet flexible protocols. In New Zealand for example, significant earthquakes are frequent and regular occurrences. As such, museums there, like Te Papa (n.y.), have developed sophisticated measures to deal with them. Crises, by contrast, are not anticipated. Capable of developing both suddenly with little forewarning, or slowly and silently without notice, they happen rarely, have no standard model, and are therefore unexpected. Nassim Nicholas Taleb (2007) theorised these events as ‘black swans’, a metaphor for something which is rare, unpredictable yet devastating on occurrence. Accordingly, crisis managers will only be able to react to them on the back foot. They can disrupt the daily routines of museums in ways which cannot be predicted (Ravail 2016: paras 21-23). This causes an ever-worsening situation: disruption causing chaos, chaos causing uncertainty, and uncertainty causing restricted decision-making (Garayev 2013: pp. 186-187). Returning to the earthquake example, in the United Kingdom, significant seismic activity is rare, the country being situated far from unstable tectonic fault lines. This means that museums from the United Kingdom will have little experience of earthquakes.

Limited anticipation strikes at the heart of what makes crises potentially so deadly. The museum that experiences a dangerous phenomenon on a regular

basis will likely recognise its typical features and know what to expect and how to manage them. The museum that experiences the same phenomenon rarely if ever, or without having established set protocols, by contrast, will likely have little or no experience of or preparations for dealing with the problem. In this latter instance, when the phenomenon does strike, the museum may be caught off guard and open to significant disruption. It follows, therefore, that what in the conception of the former museum will usually be considered a routine emergency, could for the latter museum be a crisis. Moreover, crises can develop from routine emergencies. Occasionally, phenomena which typically present as routine emergencies may occur beyond the parameters of their regular manifestation. In doing so they turn into extraordinary events that no museum could have conceived or prepared for. These extreme events can cause unprecedented, non-routine effects on impacted museums, creating crises. Didier Sornette (2009) theorised such events as ‘dragon kings’, a metaphor for events that are exceedingly large and impactful and unique in origin.

Another dimension which distinguishes crises from routine emergencies is their potential protractedness. A museum which makes it through a crisis often experiences long, drawn-out effects from the situation. Sometimes, these effects can be permanent. There are many nuanced reasons why a crisis might cause such long-lasting effects to an entity. Each instance, however, can conceivably be distilled down into one of two scenarios. The first is that the management strategy deployed was for whatever reason unsuccessful or only partially successful. The second is that the management strategy was successful, but not without fundamental lasting change or disruption to the museum. Routine emergencies, by contrast, having been anticipated and prepared for, are usually short-lived from start to finish, with fewer if any ramifications. From this it can also be reasoned that the extent of the measures necessary to deal with a crisis would be extraordinary. Not just in their potential protractedness or volume, but also their potential unprecedentedness or irregularity. A museum unfamiliar with the work necessary to realise some chosen strategy, for example,

may struggle with the implementation, denting its success. Routine emergencies by contrast can, given their familiarity, be more efficiently dealt with.

4.3.4 A definition for crisis

Drawing on its historical, philosophical and practical origins, the word ‘crisis’ has been defined for this study. As there are no longer any detailed canons to inform its meaning or use though, the definition is structured around Rüdiger Graf and Konrad H. Jarausch’s (2017: para. 39) etymologically coherent recommendation that: ‘Any viable definition [for crisis] would have to involve assumptions of some kind or another about the normal course of events, an exceptional period of tension in which at least two different outcomes are possible, and a solution’ (*ibid.*). Yet it disregards their contention that the solution must be ‘in the form of a new state of affairs’ (*ibid.*). This is for two reasons. Firstly, the above discussion about the development of the word has shown that it can be read in two ways. To give crisis a cast-iron revolutionary fixing, which Graf and Jarausch’s recommendation implies, disregards past defensive readings. Secondly, crises are subjective. This means that not all crises necessarily warrant revolutionary resolutions. Consequently, crisis is defined as follows: an unpredictable, unstable and potentially dangerous situation, where the impacted museum or other systemic entity will be disrupted, perhaps inoperably and irreparably, requiring extraordinary intervention to be overcome.

4.3.5 Using crisis in historiography

Crisis has repeatedly been used historiographically to define specific historical periods. As R. J. Overy (1994: p. 1) observes: ‘When historians use the word “crisis” they usually employ it with hindsight, taking all the facts together and imposing on them greater coherence or significance than was perceived by contemporaries’. There is nothing wrong with this approach *per se*. After all, when carrying out any research, academics often draw on their own interpretations of data to create meaning that resonates with prevailing issues

and ideas. Where problems can start arising, however, is when crisis becomes a casual explanation for historical process. As Graf and Jarausch (2017: para. 12) caution: ‘Transferring the historical diagnosis of crisis directly into the historiographical narrative [...] can easily be misleading as it totalizes one perspective on the past which was most likely formulated with specific interests’. This is an important point; it must be recognised that while one person may perceive some situation to be indicative of crisis, the same perception may not be held by another: resulting from what Max Kölbel (2004) termed a ‘faultless disagreement’. Accordingly, when used historiographically, crisis needs to be handled with consideration so that, where necessary and appropriate, accommodation can be made for other potential subjective interpretations.

There are potentially two considerate approaches that historians can take to historicise crisis. The first, devised by Graf and Jarausch (2017: para. 38), entails discovering how historical actors understood the term at any given time and deployed the word and its meaning when describing their prevailing social, political and economic situation. Where crisis consciousness has been expressed in primary sources, the historian can use the concept on those terms to critique the condition that some relevant systemic entity, such as a museum or other organisation, held. The second approach, specifically devised for use herein, entails discovering whether some defined entity could be considered gripped by crisis. More representative of the option described by Overy (1994: p. 1) than Graf and Jarausch (2017: para. 38), it becomes most appropriate where crisis consciousness has not surfaced from primary sources: the case with the primary sources consulted towards this research. The approach involves analysing the hypothetical crisis object to see whether it inhabits what has been described in following chapters as *crisis-conducive* conditions. Through doing so, the historian can try and understand the way that some crisis-conducive situation was dealt with. The upshot is an appreciation of how similar declared and legitimised crises are negotiated, and what implications they might have for the crisis object and everyone and everything dependent on it. Such scholarship

offers real, proven benefit to crisis management practitioners and the wider field. Joanne E. Hale, David P. Hale and Ronald E. Dulek (2006: p. 316), for example, find that when confronting a crisis, crisis managers can obtain assistance from past accounts of crisis management when undertaking crisis decision making, even if the situations being faced bear a limited resemblance.

4.4 Crisis Management

In analysing how the Imperial War Museum dealt with the potentially crisis-conducive situations it faced over the Second World War, the thesis also draws on the concept of *crisis management*. This involves the work of managing a crisis and any ensuing effects: the preparation for, the coping with, and the recovery from such an event. The concept became subject to considerable academic investigation during the 1980s (Frandsen and Johansen 2017: p. 32). This followed various high-profile and avoidable or mitigatable man-made disasters which struck the world throughout that decade, such as the Bhopal gas leak in India in 1984, the Space Shuttle *Challenger* explosion in the United States in 1986, the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown in Ukraine in 1986, and the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, again in the United States, in 1989 (Campbell 1999: p. 23). The current section therefore introduces and elucidates the concept, and specifies the chosen crisis management framework for the present study.

Crises are unstable, unpredictable situations. The likelihood is that the conditions of a crisis object such as a museum will deteriorate significantly – perhaps terminally – without some steadying force to restore stability. If successful, the measures taken during crisis management constitute this force. Various frameworks for crisis management have come about since the 1980s. Some set out the ways that crises could manifest in crisis objects. Others set out the ways that crises materialise (Crandall, Parnell and Spillan 2021: pp. 9-18). To be clear, they are not crisis management plans. The latter of these comprise tailored documents that specify how specific crisis objects should deal with a crisis which has arisen: establishing who communicates and does what, the way

that this should be done, etcetera (Bernstein 2011: pp 20-24). Rather, crisis management frameworks are discursive tools for understanding how crises impact crisis objects (Crandall, Parnell and Spillan 2021: p. 4).

This study explores organisational response to crisis-conducive situations by drawing on a framework for crisis management that arranges the response over several defined stages in what Christer Pursiainen (2018) calls the ‘crisis management cycle’. As Table 1 shows, multiple kinds have been developed over

Table 1 – Outline of different frameworks for crisis management (adapted from Crandall, Parnell and Spillan 2021).

Three-stage Linear Framework	Three-stage Linear Framework	Four-stage Linear Framework	Four-stage, Two-layer Matrix Framework	Five-stage Linear Framework
General format	Richardson 1994	Fink 1986	Crandall, Parnell and Spillan 2021	Pearson and Mitroff 1993
Before the Crisis Situation	Pre-crisis/disaster phase	Prodromal crisis stage	Landscape survey	Signal detection
			Strategic planning	Preparation/prevention
During the Crisis Situation	Crisis impact/rescue phase	Acute crisis stage	Crisis management	Containment and damage control
		Chronic crisis stage		
After the Crisis Situation	Recovery/demise phase	Crisis resolution stage	Organisational learning	Business recovery
				Learning

the past 30 years. Bill Richardson (1994), for example, proposes a three-stage linear variant. This represents the most basic of practicable frameworks

(Crandall, Parnell and Spillan 2021: p. 11). It comprises a pre-crisis stage, a crisis impact stage and a crisis recovery stage. In his example, Richardson (1994) asserts that crisis management starts when some museum or other organisation attempts to prevent crisis situations from occurring by addressing the underlying cause/s of it. Where prevention proves impossible, though, they must move to mitigate the crisis situation. Once the crisis situation has been mitigated, they can then move to restore operations and stakeholder confidence.

Stephen Fink (1986), by contrast, proposes a four-stage linear variant. This comprises a 'prodromal crisis stage', an 'acute crisis stage', a 'chronic crisis stage' and a 'crisis resolution stage'. In his example, Fink asserts that crisis management essentially begins and ends as that asserted by Richardson (1994). Where he diverges however, is through the differentiation between the acute and chronic effects of a crisis situation on museums. Acute effects are those that onset suddenly following some incident which disrupt operations and threaten damage. These must be suppressed urgently if the crisis situation is to be resolved. Chronic effects are those which linger in the wake of the acute effects. Although less dramatic, they can be no less disruptive, and so also require suppression before the crisis situation may be considered fully resolved.

William Crandall, John A. Parnell and John E. Spillan (2021), by contrast again, propose a four stage, two-layered matrix variant. This comprises a 'landscape survey' stage, a 'strategic planning' stage, a 'crisis management' stage and an 'organisational learning' stage. Each of these stages address not only the 'internal landscape', but also the 'external landscape. In their example, Crandall, Parnell and Spillan assert that crisis management begins with an evaluation of the internal and external threats against a museum. This is followed by an internal planning process, where strategies are conceived to deal with the detected threats, and which also considers any supporting external plans that have already been made by other organisations such as industry regulators and emergency services. If, and when, a crisis situation arises, the next stage involves resolving the disruption through managing primary and secondary

stakeholders from both the internal and external landscapes. Once the crisis has been resolved, the final stage entails a process of reflexive learning about what transpired to improve the internal response, which again also considers relevant learning being carried out by supporting organisations in the external landscape.

Each above framework for crisis management will in some way elucidate the processes that comprise this activity. Along with the many other frameworks which exist, they possess their own strengths and weaknesses of clarity, comprehensiveness and prescriptiveness in their recommendations for handling crisis, notwithstanding some overlap. As such, each contribute to the knowledge around the procedures constituting crisis management. The most useful however, and the one deemed most appropriate for us in this thesis, is the five-stage linear variant proposed by Christine M. Pearson and Ian I. Mitroff (1993). This comprises a 'signal detection' stage, a 'preparation/prevention' stage, a 'containment and damage control' stage, a 'business recovery' stage and a 'learning' stage. The significances of these stages for crisis management are considered in detail during chapter seven. In essence, Pearson and Mitroff assert that crisis management starts when some museum begins its search for crisis signals. Once crisis signals are detected, they are acted on with the view in the first instance to prevent the associated situation from emerging. Where that is not possible however, they are acted on with the view to prepare to weather the crisis situation. If weathering the crisis situation becomes necessary, the next stage involves a two-fold process of containing and limiting the effects. Containment comprises preventing the crisis effects from spreading, while limitation comprises minimising the extent that the effects can cause damage. Once the effects have been dealt with sufficiently, attention turns towards restoring operations. Finally, after the crisis situation has subsided, a process of learning takes place with the aim of assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the response. Pearson and Mitroff's framework strikes a good balance between, on one hand, breadth and depth, and on the other, flexibility, with the guidance

offered being neither overly limited nor prescriptive. Overall, it provides a useful opening to understanding what crisis management entails.

4.5 Resilience

A consideration of the concepts of crisis and crisis management necessitates a consideration of the concept of *resilience*. This is a notion understood in many fields but one rarely qualified until ‘after the fact’ (Coutu 2002: p. 3). It concerns the ability of a systemic entity to successfully traverse adverse forces (Cooper, Flint-Taylor and Pearn 2013: pp. 14-15). Researchers from various different fields draw on resilience in their work (Bhamra, Burnard and Dani 2015: p. 4; see Barnett and Pratt 2000; Walker *et al.* 2002; Hamel and Valikangas 2003; Sheffi 2005; Hollnagel, Wood and Leveson 2006; Powley 2009). Its essential meaning however remains the same (Bhamra, Burnard and Dani 2015: p. 4). This section therefore introduces and elucidates the concept.

In the organisational context, resilience is understood as an ability to withstand, recover from or adapt to difficult or changing conditions while still maintaining their functionality (Leflar and Siegel 2013: p. 11; Bhamra, Burnard and Dani 2015: p. 21; McCarthy, Collard and Johnson 2017: p. 33). Robert R. Janes (2009: p. 141) describes the resilience as being ‘supple, agile and adaptable’. A resilient museum, therefore, is reflexive to the environment and can offer diverse and divergent responses to societal need.

It is easy to mistake the activities undertaken towards upholding a museum’s resilience as dealing with crisis. After all, at a fundamental level, any museum which has managed and survived some crisis will have done so by drawing on their own innate resilience. As Erica Seville (2017: p. 19) reveals, the ingredients essential for organisational resilience are also those necessary for carrying out organisational crisis management: ‘situational awareness’, ‘proactive posture’, ‘planning strategies’, ‘decision making’, etcetera. But not all museums which have undertaken such crisis management-related activities have found themselves actually locked in the throes of crisis.

Although resilience and crisis management are both essentially reactionary processes, the process performed in the context of resilience is routine whereas those performed in the context of crisis management have occurred under extraordinary circumstances. As previously discussed, crises are unpredictable, unstable and dangerous situations which can strike any museum or other organisation – even resilient ones. Consequently, while crisis management always involves responding to change, confronting change alone is not enough to evidence that a museum has been gripped by crisis. In this sense, resilience can be viewed as being a desired state for a museum, whereas crises can be viewed as an obstacle posed before them. Resilience and crisis management are two separate though not mutually exclusive ideas. Resilience is the quality of being able to respond to change in society, whereas crisis management is the act of responding to critical events often resulting from societal change. It comprises a condition that should be built into all museums. As Janes (2009) contends, resilience is essential to the long-term survivability of museums.

4.6 Reinvention

4.6.1 A product of misalignment with the social system

Over chapters nine and ten, this thesis intensifies its focus on crisis management. It does so through analysing the reinvention of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War. *Reinvention* is framed herein as a particular strategy for crisis management. Specifically, it comprises an approach to the management of the immediately preceding revolutionary conceptualisation of crisis, applied against the Imperial War Museum in chapter eight. That is where crisis becomes understood, in the modern context, as a breaking point and transitional phase. This section therefore introduces and elucidates the concept, including considering the way reinvention can be analysed in academic work.

The word reinvention has been variously defined. All published definitions however are firmly grounded in the concept of *change*: the transition from one state to another (Clarke 1994). Moreover, mainstream English

language dictionary definitions for the root word, *reinvent*, provide near uniform meanings: a process whereby a wholly new or radically different entity is created from something which already exists (Oxford 2009, Cambridge 2013, Collins 2014). While these definitions are accurate in so far as they sketch out the idea, like the word crisis, each are too simple when it comes to their practical use. Realistically, reinvention is a complicated and multifaceted process. Illustrating this point, Anthony Elliot's (2013) work on the subject demonstrates that both tangible and intangible man-made entities can be transformed in such ways, while Montgomery Van Wart's (1995) work emphasises that individual processes are unique to the entity being transformed at any given time or within any given space. Accordingly, through involving both physical and metaphysical entities and because no two processes are alike, reinvention requires a more sophisticated appreciation than one predicated on change alone.

Reinvention stems from a need and desire to change or do something completely differently. There could be many reasons for this. When examining individual instances of reinvention, the need or desire derives from the fact that an entity such as an organisation has become misaligned with the social system it operates under and, therefore, diminishes in relevance. To be *relevant* is to yield 'positive cognitive effect' (Simon 2016: p. 29). When an entity such as a museum becomes misaligned with the social system, they no longer create that positive cognitive effect. Accordingly, the entity loses its relevance and risks becoming a drain on its stakeholder/s while offering nothing in return.

Misalignments occur between a museum and their social system when one diverges away from the other. Societies which embody social systems are fluid and continually transforming. They develop fresh ideas and technologies that alter the way people act and interact in them. Events can also force societies to modify their thoughts and practices (Black 2021b). This phenomenon has been given the term *value shift* by Van Wart (1995: p. 429). Value shifts are inevitable and affect all societies. Depending on the circumstances, some societies experience value shifts more frequently than others (*ibid.*).

Van Wart describes realignment as a *value adjustment* (*ibid.*: p. 430). By making value adjustments, a museum can adapt themselves to meet the updated needs held by the social system. If executed strategically, undertaking such adaptation should ensure it can once again yield relevance (*ibid.*). But value adjustments rarely occur in parallel with value shifts. Various factors often discourage non-urgent adaptation from taking place. Typically, value adjustments occur when the pressure to adapt becomes so great that continuing with the *status quo* becomes impossible. Accordingly, museums and other non-infrastructure public or private sector organisations which do not make value adjustments when necessary put their future in jeopardy (*ibid.*).

A museum's ability to make value adjustments also occurs through another sociological phenomenon: *reflexivity* (see Schorch 2009 and Butler 2015 for examples in museum practice). This concerns the act of self-referring. It comprises the process by which actors, either acting for themselves or another entity, receive incoming information. Depending on their interpretation of that information, the actors will then take whatever action is deemed appropriate to navigate the future (Johnson 2000: pp. 255-256). Anthony Giddens (1990: p. 36) calls this process *reflexive monitoring of action*. Reflexivity is, therefore, a crucial ingredient of reinvention, indeed crisis management. Without the ability to evaluate positions against perceptions of the present or future, targeted actions for an actor's onward process would be impossible. This means that reinvention also results from subjective assessment, similarly to crisis.

Another dimension to reinvention is its continuity. As the following pithy comment by Josh Linkner (2014: p. 11), which comprises the core message of his work, sets out in no uncertain terms: 'reinvention isn't an event; it's a lifelong process'. With social systems continually undergoing value shifts, the process of reinvention will forever remain a looming imperative over most museums while they seek to preserve their relevance and long-term prospects.

4.6.2 Analysing reinvention

Every reinvention is the product of a highly individual process. They arise from circumstances, follow courses and result in outcomes that are dependent on the context wherein they occur. The revolutionary crisis situation prompting one museum's reinvention for example, may stem from different underlying causes and discontinuities to the revolutionary crisis situation prompting the reinvention of another. Each reinvention process, therefore, needs to be tailored to address the fundamental cause catalysing the crisis situation at hand. This idiosyncrasy can make the analysis of reinvention very challenging. Yet there are common components which may be analysed via a reinvention formula to outline the various prerequisites necessary for successful reinvention.

The earliest example of a reinvention formula was conceived by David Gleicher during the 1960s at the management consultant company Arthur D. Little (Cady *et al.* 2014: 32-33). Forwarded by Richard Beckhard (1975) in the *Sloan Management Review*, it has been disseminated amongst and revised by organisational theorists (Cady *et al.* 2014). The original formula comprised an equation, representing the factors that change and reinvention necessitate:

$$C = (ABD) > X$$

The value *C* equals *change*, *A* equals the level of *dissatisfaction* with the prevailing situation, *B* equals an understanding of the *desired state*, *D* equals an awareness of the *practical first steps* necessary to reach the desired state, and finally *X* equals the associated *cost*. It shows that for reinvention to take place, three conditions must be met. The first is a level of dissatisfaction with the current situation. The second is a conception of the desired or required situation. And the third is an understanding of the practical first steps necessary to reach that desired or required situation. Once these values have been established and weighed up, the need for change must be greater than the cost incurred when executing it. This cost is more than finance: also time, effort, energy, etcetera.

$$\text{Change} = (\text{Dissatisfaction, Desired State and Practical First Steps}) > \text{Cost}$$

(Beckhard 1975: p. 45)

Three points arise when reflecting on the implications of this formula in the museum context. The first is that without dissatisfaction, such as dissatisfaction which arises from a revolutionary crisis situation, change becomes an exercise undertaken purely for its own sake. Such acts put museums at great risk. It risks potentiating subsequent unnecessary dissatisfaction and, in doing so, further costly change to address that. But this is a conceivably rare occurrence. Even change that takes place during times of stability typically occurs from dissatisfaction with the *status quo* through concern about stagnation (see Vermeulen, Puranam and Gulati 2010). The second point is that where only certain museum agents perceive the need for change, their first steps should be to enrol those which do not require or see the need for change into empathising with and supporting these desires. After all, a united, supportive approach towards change stands more chance of succeeding than one which has only partial support (Hannagan 2002: pp. 154-157). And the third point is that any desired museal state must ultimately cohere with the values kept and upheld by the prevailing social system. If not, the change will unlikely be legitimised by stakeholders or society at large, potentially jeopardising the museum through inactivity and/or diminishing its legitimacy (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975).

4.7 Chapter Conclusion

This background chapter has critiqued the various concepts through which the challenges faced by the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era are analysed. It also considers other key theories and ideas that complement them. In the first substantive section, the chapter sets out the concepts of the institution, organisation and museum. This was to understand the conceptual context underlying the study because the Imperial War Museum embodied each.

In doing so, it establishes that museums, through comprising organisations, arguably comprise institutions with the power to shape and move society, which embodying an institution entails. Yet, through comprising organisations, the chapter also established that museums are not granted with the same level of power as intangible institutions. This is because organisations must incorporate the ideas and practices generated by intangible institutions which dominates society and which the people therein look for. Accordingly, it shows the susceptibility of museums to the need for change with the social system, potentially catalysing crises. In the second, third and fourth substantive sections, the chapter established and built on the concepts which drive the main thrust of the thesis: resilience, crisis and crisis management, and reinvention. This enabled it to introduce the assumptions and philosophical positionality of the study and also the conceptual lenses deployed against the research problem. Through engaging with these concepts, the chapter revealed their interrelatedness when concerning the ways crisis can impact museums and the ways museums can respond. It also contends that the best way to answer the central question is by framing the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era as inhabiting crisis-conducive situations. This prevents crisis being treated anachronistically or importantly where its importance is moot.

This thesis explores how the Imperial War Museum survived the Second World War. It does so through engaging with the concepts of crisis and reinvention assisted, as appropriate, by other concepts at a lesser extent. As this chapter has shown, the concept of crisis is challenging to comprehend and handle. When incorporated in research, scholars must study the idea thoroughly. This includes the word's etymology and different readings that have arisen over the concept's development. Being inherently subjective phenomena, crisis-conducive situations comprise difficult, fundamentally disruptive and potentially dangerous scenarios. When managing legitimised crises, museums as with all organisations must draw on their resilience to overcome adversity. This can be found in their physical and metaphysical infrastructure, which should be

sufficiently developed so they can withstand various kinds of harsh conditions. Moreover, updating or strengthening this infrastructure can, where done appropriately, also be a manifestation of resilience. Sometimes the necessary adaptation is so extensive that it embodies complete reinvention.

Reinvention is a far more recent word than crisis. The concept however, which embodies principles that far predate the word's creation and absorption in the English lexicon, requires no lesser an analysis to be understood.

Fundamentally, reinvention denotes the process of creating something profoundly new from something already in existence. For museums that face a crisis of diminishing relevance and therefore legitimacy, reinvention can comprise an effective form of crisis management. Such situations manifest from the misalignment between museums and the social system they inhabit, an incessant prospect. The analysis of this poses a challenge to researchers through reinvention's near infinite variability. In the organisational context, however, the challenge can be overcome by investigating the issues and ideas behind a museum's dissatisfaction with its *status quo*, its contrasting desired state and the practical steps necessary towards reaching its desired state.

This chapter is the last of the background chapters setting out how the thesis was produced. Over the following six chapters, the thesis commences with the constituent study proper. In the next chapter, it historically contextualises the Imperial War Museum as an institution, organisation and museum. Drawing on the relevant issues and ideas discussed above, it shows that the Imperial War Museum of the Second World War era embodies many current features of institutions, organisations and museums, demonstrating the contemporary relevance that this study can have for both professionals and scholars with concern for museums and crisis management.

Chapter 5 The Imperial War Museum, 1917-1939: Institution, Organisation and Museum

5.1 Chapter Introduction

Crisis and change are two inevitabilities facing museums over their existences. Although the nature and extent of these cannot be certain until after the fact, what can be certain is that their outcomes, big or small, will have far reaching consequences. The crisis-conducive situation and change experienced at the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War, considered over the forthcoming chapters, demonstrate this. IWM, as it is known today, comprises a museum on all war and armed conflict involving the United Kingdom, British Empire and the Commonwealth since 1914. Yet this broad, open-ended subject remit has not always existed there. Over the period 1917 when the Imperial War Museum was founded until 1939 when the Second World War commenced, it comprised a museum on the First World War, or Great War, only. The Second World War ended this paradigm however, bringing about a crisis-conducive situation and change which only ended once the museum's *raison d'être* and rationale were reconfigured to align with the new societal context. It can be posited, therefore, that the Imperial War Museum which exited the Second World War in 1945 was very different from the museum which entered in 1939.

To understand everything that occurred at the Imperial War Museum over the Second World War, an appreciation of its physical and metaphysical contexts before the conflict is needed. Museums are more than just museums. They are also institutions and organisations: constructs that raise philosophical and practical implications for the way museums exist and how crisis can affect them. These contexts are the focus of the current chapter. Undertaking such a survey is important to the arguments made over the following pages. Through profiling holistically the form of the interwar Imperial War Museum, I expose in this chapter vulnerabilities that the approaching Second World War placed on it.

This chapter explores the above over three substantive sections. The first section (5.2) surveys the Imperial War Museum as an institution. It discusses the sources of power and legitimacy of the museum as the Second World War neared, analysing how the museum was influenced by society. Through looking at these issues, the pre-Second World War *raison d'être* and rationale of the Imperial War Museum is considered. The second substantive section (5.3) surveys the Imperial War Museum as an organisation. It discusses the architecture of the museum: the museum's structure, processes and boundaries. This helps give understanding to the physical and metaphysical character of the Imperial War Museum before the Second World War. And the third substantive section (5.4) surveys the Imperial War Museum as a museum. It discusses the collections and exhibitions of the museum – arguably the museum's most indicative facets – analysing their basic features, characteristics, and qualities. In doing so, the historical context of the Imperial War Museum is presented. This shows how its collection and exhibition programme came into existence.

5.2 The Imperial War Museum as an Institution

5.2.1 Three pillars of institutionalism

Institutions have been presented in chapter four (see subsection 4.2.1) as physical and abstract constructs that guide, influence or control the way society operates and generates knowledge and understanding about itself. They are also things which advance and perpetuate societal behaviour (North 1990: pp. 3-4; Scott *et al.* 1994: p. 68). In doing so, institutions bring structure, balance, and steadiness to social life. This is achieved through them incorporating what W. Richard Scott (2014: p. 57) has conceptualised as regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements: the formative components or, as Scott calls them, 'pillars', that uphold institutions. Each pillar establishes the basis for institutional power. They also set whether power is exercised openly or secretly and implemented forcefully, coercively or consensually (Hoffman 2001: p. 36).

It is common for institutions to exhibit properties of two or three pillars at any given moment (Scott 2014: p. 70). It is also common for one pillar to be perceived as predominant, the individual conception conceivably being dependent on the beholder's ontological and epistemological positionality (*ibid.*: p. 59). As institutional functionality changes, however, so too can conceptions about the predominance of different pillars. According to Scott (*ibid.*: p. 62), 'institutions supported by one pillar may, as time passes and circumstances change, be sustained by different pillars'. The Imperial War Museum is a case in point. Over its first 22 years, its institutional power base can be seen to have altered as its prevailing social system underwent value shifts.

5.2.2 As a regulative institution

Regulative institutions are understood as human-made institutions which set the terms of, manage and promote societal conduct. This could be through establishing rules or codes, monitoring compliance, and sanctioning reward or punishment for adherence or any breaches (*ibid.*: pp. 59-64; Hoffman 2001: p. 36). In line with this understanding, the foundation of the Imperial War Museum is seen and argued herein as arising through an imperative by the British government to extract war-winning behaviour from the public.

On 5 March 1917, the War Cabinet approved an idea, submitted by Sir Alfred Mond, the First Commissioner of Works, the previous month to establish a national war museum (Condell 1985: p. 15). There are two arguments for this decision. One is put forward by Diana Condell (2002). Another has been forwarded by Gaynor Kavanagh (1994). Both are outlined below.

Condell's (2002: p. 29) argument stems from the tremendous loss of life sustained by the British Army over the then recent months, particularly from the Battle of the Somme six months previously. During this offensive, fought over 1 July-18 November 1916, some 250,000 soldiers, predominantly volunteers recruited at the war's outset, were killed outright or terminally injured. An estimated 182,000 were also temporarily incapacitated (Prior and Wilson 2005:

pp. 300-301). Compounding matters, the casualties were often concentrated in specific areas: the men having been recruited into so-called 'Pals battalions' (Simkins 1996: pp. 240-242). Condell (2002: p. 29) contends that tragedies like this, alongside other impacts which the war had on society, fundamentally altered 'the relationship between citizen and the state'; 'for the first time, [the country fought] a truly national war'. Accordingly, people started searching for conduits through which to make commemorations. When these could not be found, they started erecting street shrines while local newspapers and other periodicals printed 'rolls of honour' (Kavanagh 1994: pp. 117-119). Some state recognition was therefore needed (Condell 1985: pp. 14-15; Condell 2002: 29). Kavanagh's (1994: pp. 121-122) argument, by contrast, stems from two events that occurred during late-1916 and early-1917. The first was a political coup on 6 December which saw David Lloyd George replace Herbert Asquith as the British Prime Minister. The second was Lloyd George's subsequent restructuring of the United Kingdom's propaganda machine on 20 February.

The new Prime Minister wasted no time in consolidating his new position. He revamped the country's prosecution of the war by overhauling various government departments. He also saw the war effort flounder through low morale from high casualties and increasing privations and realised the importance opinion forming had in combatting it (Cassar 2009). After receiving reports about the rather disorganised nature of the existing propaganda bureau, he arranged for the War Cabinet to approve the organisation's supersession. In its place was established the Department of Information: a more focussed, less fragmented body with greater scope for domestic opinion forming formation (Monger 2012: pp. 24-26). This occurred two weeks before the 5 March 2017 decision to found a national war museum. Kavanagh (1994: p. 122) questions therefore whether 'the National War Museum was part of a much larger initiative on propaganda, aimed at combatting war weariness'. The establishment of the National War Aims Committee, five months after the 5 March decision, adds credence to this argument (Monger 2012: p. 17).

The arguments put forward by Condell (2002) and Kavanagh (1994) for the foundation of the Imperial War Museum draw on completely different reasoning. Their conceptualisations regarding the museum as an institution therefore also totally differ. Condell (2002) argues that the Imperial War Museum was founded to satisfy public need for some formal commemorative outlet. As such, she infers the creation of an institution geared toward social and cultural healing and cohesion: one resting, predominantly, on the cultural-cognitive column, which is discussed more below (Scott 2014: pp. 66-70). This diverges from the institution conceptualised by Kavanagh (1994), however, who argues that the Imperial War Museum arose from political action to reinvigorate the country's fighting spirit. She in contrast infers the creation of an institution resting predominantly on the regulative pillar (Scott 2014: pp. 59-64).

It can be confidently speculated that both cultural and political need were factored in the final decision to establish the Imperial War Museum. Yet, when weighing them up together, the plausibly more prominent stimulus comprised the political, suggesting the decision derived, as Kavanagh argues, from operational requirement. Additional evidence supporting this view comes from the fact that during 1916 the government had closed all national museums and galleries for cost cutting purposes until the war's conclusion (Kavanagh 1994: pp. 36-44). It also tried, unsuccessfully, to halt the construction of the only art gallery to be built during the war years themselves, the Shipley Art Gallery in Gateshead (Lang n.y.). Moreover, the initial sum agreed by the government for the project was set at just £3,000 (Kavanagh 1994: p. 122). Such limited expenditure implies an expectation of quick returns. In 1823, by contrast, the National Gallery was established on £60,000 (Conlin 2006: 50). And finally, the project was initiated and, until 2 July 1920, funded and operated without formal incorporation by Royal Charter or Act of Parliament (Kavanagh 1994: p. 136; HC Deb. (1920-1921) 127, col. 1465). From the extant sources available, it appears that when the *Imperial War Museum Act 1920*, which did eventually incorporate the institution as a public body (IWM 2020: p. 54) – or a

‘Government Museum’,² as the 1923 annual report described the status, one supported by the Treasury and Office of Works (HC Deb. (1919-1920) 121, col. 1617) – received royal assent, there remained no need to establish the museum amongst the legislation’s text. This, crucially, is because the museum had already been established, *de facto*, via a Class IV vote in Parliament on 27 February 1918 (HC Deb. (1918-1919) 103, col. 1408). According to Kavanagh’s (1994: p. 136) interpretation of events, that move afforded ‘some recognition of the museum’s status as a formal, national institution’. By contrast, the Act of Parliament incorporating the National Maritime Museum some 14 years later did establish this institution in the legislation’s text, there being no pre-existing embryonic or appropriately comparable body that could be readily adopted for the National Maritime Museum (HC Deb. (1934-1935) 291, col. 1496), notwithstanding the Naval Museum at the Royal Naval College, which the National Maritime Museum subsumed (*National Maritime Museum Act 1934*).

The above conclusion suggests that the Imperial War Museum was originally conceived by the War Cabinet as a short-term, regulative institution. Although, clearly, it was not geared towards setting and enforcing codified laws and penalties. Founded to reinvigorate the country’s national war effort, the museum was rather an institution geared towards stimulating societal conduct. This occurred by deploying far softer mechanisms, such as targeting emotion. Consequently, the institution empowered action through inspiring people to act and fostering guilt amongst and shaming of those who did not (Scott 2014: pp. 60, 63). The initial wartime temporary exhibitions of the institution exemplify this (Kavanagh 1994: pp. 140-143). At Burlington House and Whitechapel Art Gallery, for example, women’s war work was heavily profiled with a view to promoting recruitment of women into the women’s wartime services (Mercer 2013: pp. 335-336). At Whitechapel Art Gallery particularly, live interpretation made visitors feel much more like participants in the war than spectators.

² IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/007, typed report, ‘Imperial War Museum: 7th Annual Report (4th Report of the Board of Trustees), 1923-1924’, p. 1.

5.2.3 As a normative institution

The First World War ended on 11 November 1918. With that, so too did the original regulative imperative of the Imperial War Museum. But rather than wind down the project for having become obsolete, the organising committee continued their work, eventually opening it on 9 June 1920 at the Crystal Palace, Sydenham, with a remit akin to a normative institution. Normative institutions uphold the aims and objectives of society through introducing rigid, mandatory dynamics which help society assess usefulness, importance and worth in the social system, and also set the methodology necessary for obtaining them (Scott 2014: pp. 64-66). They hold similarities with regulative institutions by comprising human-made entities which influence societal conduct (Hoffman 2001: p. 36). The difference, however, lies in their efforts to normalise ideas and practices, rather than impose them (Scott 2014: pp. 64-66). They achieve this through dealing in what are known as ‘*values*’ and ‘*norms*’. Institutional values comprise what is perceived and regarded as favoured or popular situations. Norms are the legitimate means by which values are strived for (*ibid.*: p. 64).

It could be argued therefore that during the First World War the Imperial War Museum did not comprise a predominantly regulative institution, but rather a normative one. Such an argument has not been subscribed to here, however. This is because regulative institutions, as Scott (2014: p. 60) conceives them, embody an instrumental logic, the apparent rationale behind the Imperial War Museum (Kavanagh 1994). Normative institutions, by contrast, embody a logic geared towards setting out what is and is not appropriate in society: whether they cohere with the accepted values and norm thereof (Scott 2014: p. 60).

The opening ceremony of the Imperial War Museum in 1920 was attended by royalty, clergy, politicians, officers and other dignitaries. Newspaper reports describe an event underpinned by solemn Christian religious acts. It was a symbolic moment, marking what was widely believed at the time as the start of an enlightened, peaceful age (see, for example, anon. 1920a; anon. 1920b; anon. 1920c; anon. 1920d). Sue Malvern (2000: p. 185) similarly

interprets the event as ‘a funeral or laying-to-rest of the nation’s trauma and loss’. Addressing King George V at the opening, Sir Alfred Mond spoke of how: ‘The Museum was not conceived as a monument of military glory, but rather as a record of toil and sacrifice’.³ In response to this, The King stated that:

We cannot say with what eyes posterity will regard this Museum, nor what ideas it will arouse in their minds. We hope and pray that as the result of what we have done and suffered they may be able to look back upon war, its instruments and its organisation as belonging to a dead past.⁴

These words came to epitomise the mission of the institution over the interwar years as making a representation of the ‘war to end all war’.

The values which the Imperial War Museum dealt with throughout the interwar years revolved around an understanding that the Allied victory over the Central Powers had been costly for the country, involving major sacrifices in life and financial and material resources, but necessary. The museum conveyed this through a message which stated that the war had been hard-won owing to a united effort (Malvern 2000: pp. 185-187). It avoided triumphalism, though did set out to explain why the United Kingdom had become involved (*ibid.*: 187-188; Cooke and Jenkins 2001: p. 385). The exhibitions, however, presented more nuanced interpretation, which complicated this intended message (Wellington 2017: p. 244). In one sense they were commemorative. The objects became treated as ‘sacred relics’ (Cornish 2004: p. 46): a term from Christian theology for an object comprising the physical remains of, or which has been touched by, a saint (Geisbusch 2012: p. 202). But in another sense they were also technical. At the same time, the objects on display drew heavily on material

³ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/003, typed report, ‘Third Annual Report of the Imperial War Museum, 1919-1920’, p. 3.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.4.

detail (Wellington 2017: pp. 244-247). Alys Cundy (2017c: p. 266) rationalises this by describing them as possessing an interpretive hybridity: ‘The museum’s objects were perceived to function as items of technical education and interest, but also as “actual” remains with a physical connection to the past’. Overall, therefore, the visitor was pushed towards multiple meanings.

The norms which the Imperial War Museum dealt with towards achieving those values involved instilling an air of reverence and commemoration to remembrance. It must be emphasised that the institution was not, nor ever has been, an official memorial. Yet throughout the interwar years, the institution comprised a *de facto* centre for commemoration. This resulted not only from the commemorative qualities maintained by the exhibits discussed above, but also the practice at the institution of scattering memorialising items throughout the galleries and other spaces such as entrances, stairways, corridors and vestibules. Sometimes, both historical exhibits and memorialised items exhibited together. Drawing on Michel Foucault’s (1986) ideas about *heterotopia* – the concept that some piece of defined space holds meaning which juxtaposes, disturbs or intensifies the space surrounding it – Cundy (2015b: p. 254) suggests this was undertaken ‘to establish a system of representation that differed from yet also transcended, and thus provided the backdrop to, the informative main displays’.

In one early example, visitors at the Imperial War Museum could see the preserved field gun from L Battery, Royal Horse Artillery, deployed at the Affair of Néry during September 1914, placed alongside the original, temporarily intended wood and plaster cenotaph designed by Sir Edwin Landseer Lutyens (*ibid.*: pp. 254-255). This gun was only one from L Battery to survive the skirmish, its crew each being awarded the Victoria Cross for their actions (Hulton 2014: pp. 87-88). In another, later example, when the museum had been located at the Imperial Institute, South Kensington, over 1924-1936, the cenotaph became placed alongside other commemorative elements at the entrance. This enhanced the institution’s commemorative quality, as visitors came into contact with the sentiment when they entered the galleries (Cundy

2015b: pp. 257-258). On passing through this heterotopic, memorialised *installation* – a socially constructed control apparatus – the commemorative elements presented the arriving visitors with sentiments of remembrance. They then conceivably carried these sentiments with them through the galleries, conforming their behaviour to the museum’s desired standards of thought, meaning making and deference (see Lahlou 2018). In another, even later example, from when the museum was located at the former-Bethlem Royal Hospital building, Southwark, where it remains today, the cenotaph became placed alongside artwork in the picture gallery.⁵ Here it overtly filliped or instigated a commemorative reception to the paintings displayed there, depending on the art (Malvern 2000: pp. 188-189). Consequently, the Imperial War Museum became a veritable sanctum of memorialisation for British society.

5.2.4 As a cultural-cognitive institution

Cultural-cognitive institutions are those which represent the cultural frameworks that make up the social system. Occurring organically, they are built on and perpetuate orthodoxy: what society considers right and proper (Scott 2014: pp. 60, 66-70; Hoffman 2001: p. 36). Throughout the interwar years, the Imperial War Museum increasingly echoed British society’s concerns for peace. It did this by profiling anti-war messages about war’s futility alongside the commemorative-technical messages. In doing so, the museum became increasingly reliant, if not completely dependent, on the cultural-cognitive pillar to make relevant representations (Malvern 2000: p. 192). The incorporation of anti-war messages in the exhibitions of the Imperial War Museum reached its zenith during the 1930s. One reason for this was the museum’s relocation in 1935 to the former-Bethlem Royal Hospital building, Southwark. An erstwhile mental asylum, the building augmented its ‘war to end all war’ rhetoric with the

⁵ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, ‘Imperial War Museum: 19th Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees for the Years 1935-1936 and 1936-1937’, p. 5.

idea that war represented insanity (*ibid.*). As Martin Conway, Lord Conway of Allington, the museum's first Director-General, stated during a House of Lords debate on the relocation: 'I do not think that a lunatic asylum is at all a bad place for a War Museum' (HL Deb. (1932-1933) 86, col. 152).

Another likely reason was the prospect of yet further European war, which had stimulated widespread public revulsion and anti-war sentiment over the 1920s and 1930s across the United Kingdom (Davis 2017). And yet, ironically, this occurred against renewed interest in the museum from the public, who sought information about what might be expected from another armed conflict. The government also conducted urgent war research using the museum's diverse collection.⁶ Responding to this interest, Leslie Ripley Bradley, the museum's second Director-General and person who would steer it through the Second World War, lamented in the 1938-1939 annual report that:

it cannot be too strongly emphasised that such are not the functions which the Museum was founded to perform, but rather was it to show the futility of war, and that its heroism is bought at all too dear a cost. It was to make an historical record of the war 'that was to end war', and not of the first of a series of world wars, each more terrible than the last.⁷

This adherence was despite the original concept having already strictly speaking been nullified following many other brutal conflicts (see Ziegler 2016).

The continued observance of the 'war to end all war' narrative by the Imperial War Museum was not through ignorance or blind obedience. Society must have granted it new meaning. This is plausible because understanding of concepts often accumulates – or loses – nuance over time. As Stuart Hall (2013: p. 10) explains: 'meaning does not inhere in things [...]. It is constructed'. This

⁶ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 21st Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees', p. 1.

⁷ *Ibid.*

speaks to the idea of the cultural-cognitive institutionalisation. Through public interaction, the ‘war to end all war’ notion altered depending on how people conceived the world around them (Scott 2014: p. 67). Malvern’s (2000: p. 181) analysis of the evolving societal reception to King George V’s remarks at the institution’s opening ceremony, which hinged on the understanding that the First World War was the ‘war to end all war’, supports this premise:

Just after 1918, it could reinforce a mood of national mourning but it could also make criticism of the war seem like a dishonouring of the dead. By the mid 1930s, the statement might have been read as a powerful desire to avoid another war.

It can be posited therefore that by April 1939 the notion of the ‘war to end all war’ had held various nuanced meanings since first being coined. Initially, during the war itself, the words may have offered messages intended to galvanise the population into defeating the Central Powers. Then, immediately after the war, it may have presented messages intended to help alleviate the nation’s shock at what had transpired. Next, as the country healed and families grieved over the 1920s, it may have communicated messages intended to reassure loved ones left behind. And finally, with another European war looking likely over the 1930s, it may have conveyed messages intended to warn against history repeating itself. The Imperial War Museum drew on this cultural-cognitive institutionalisation. In doing so, it ensured the museum was viewed as connected or in touch, rather than at odds, with the prevailing cultural beliefs.

5.3 The Imperial War Museum as an Organisation

5.3.1 Components of organisation

Organisations have been presented in chapter four (see subsection 4.2.2) as systemic entities established to help realise aims and objectives (North 1990: pp. 3-5). Museums comfortably embody this general understanding, possessing

many commonalities with other organisations (Sukel 1994). As systemic entities, organisations are the sum of manifold parts. When combined and coordinated, these parts synergise to produce outcomes. There are multiple ways of theorising organisations. One effective approach is offered by Child (1984; 2005), who accomplishes this by breaking organisations down into their physical and metaphysical elements under three main categories – structural, processual and boundary crossing components – and by analysing their roles.

The first category comprises *structural components*. These constitute the metaphorical flesh and bone of an organisation and are subdivisible into two further categories. *Basic structural components* allocate responsibility among organisational agents – their personnel – along with the necessary physical and metaphysical resources to see that responsibility met (Child 2005: pp. 6-7). *Procedural components* set how an organisation acts and behaves, such components including rules and standards, schedules and systems. The second category comprises *processual components*. Comprising ‘integration’, ‘control’ and ‘reward’ measures, these enable an organisation to achieve the best possible productivity by aligning the cognitive and physical exertions of its workforce (*ibid.*: pp. 8, 12-13). And the third category comprises *boundary crossing components*. Many organisations today regularly cross boundaries by letting their departments share areas of concern, aims and objectives, and even resources with other internal departments (*ibid.*: pp. 8, 15-17). Some even cross boundaries by outsourcing certain aspects of their operation to other organisations. This move supposedly lets the outsourcing organisation focus on their principal activities (*ibid.*: pp. 9, 15-16). Such behaviour was once rare in organisation. The sharing of departmental aims and objectives and resources, for example, used to be considered uncontrollable, wasteful and chaotic, while outsourcing potentially threatened organisational autonomy (*ibid.*: p. 8).

5.3.2 Management

At the start of the Second World War era the Imperial War Museum had developed a five-tier *hierarchical* organisational chain of command, not including assistants, which became the basis for its basic structure. Figure 1 demonstrates the structure that the museum took from 1933 until 1939. Such structuration is often found underpinning museums (Genoways and Ireland 2003: pp. 40-41), facilitating the so-called Classical Approach to organisational management formed by Henri Fayol (Fopp 1997: pp. 11-15).

From 1936, the most senior staff member, occupying the second tier, was Leslie Ripley Bradley as Director-General, depicted in Figure 2.⁸ Responsibility for daily decisions made at the Imperial War Museum lay ultimately with him (Miller 2018: pp. 29-44). An alumnus of St John's College, Oxford, and a veteran from the First World War, Bradley joined the Imperial War Museum during 1917. He started work there as a storekeeper, specialising in posters after being medically discharged from the British Army during 1916.⁹ Over his career at the Imperial War Museum, Bradley climbed the ladder, gaining skills, knowledge, and experience; responsibility; and positions of authority. In 1933, he succeeded Charles ffoulkes as Curator and Secretary and in 1936 Lord Conway as Director-General and Accounting Officer (anon. 1968).

⁸ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 17th Annual Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees, 1933-1934', pp. 1-2; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 18th Annual Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees, 1934-1935', pp. 1-2; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 19th Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees for the Years 1935-1936 and 1936-1937', pp. i-ii; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 20th Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees', pp. i-ii; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 21st Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees', pp. i-ii.

⁹ The National Archives (TNA), WO 339/54103, typed letter, Davies to Bradley, 29 September 1916.

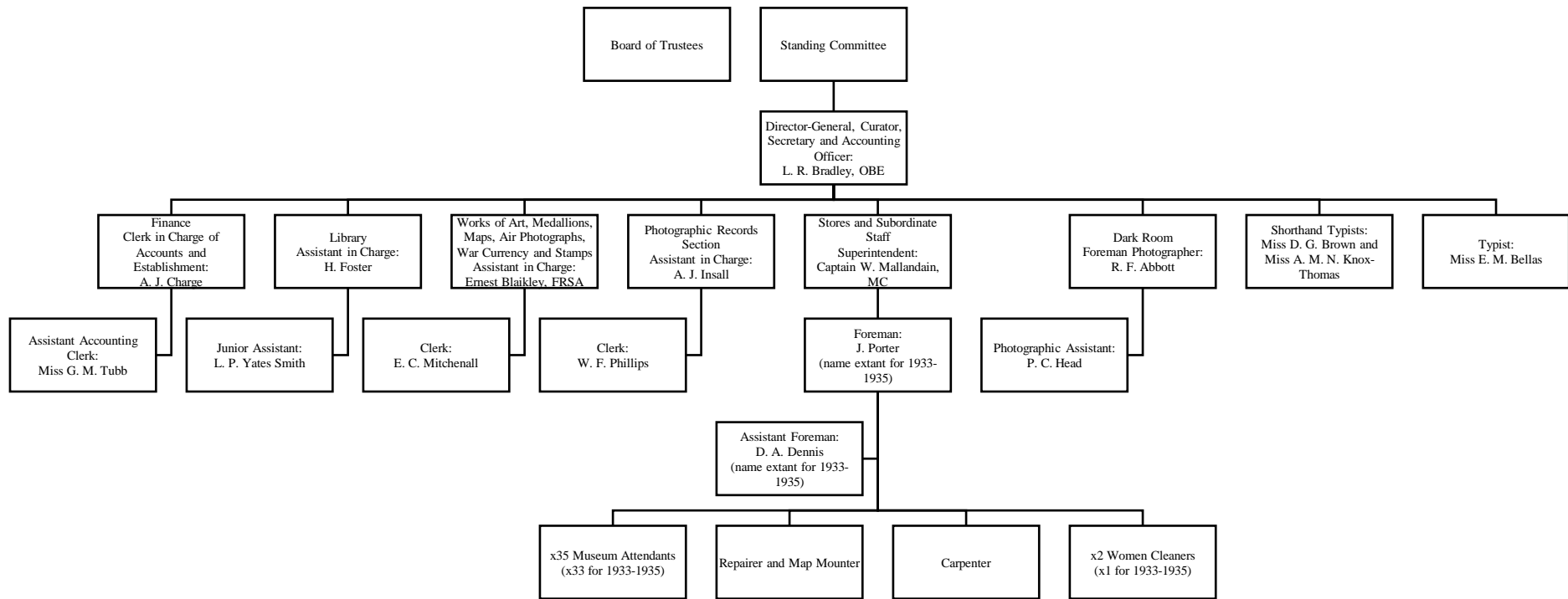


Figure 1 – The hierarchy of the Imperial War Museum over the financial years 1933-1939 with staff names where these remain extant.

A peculiarity of Bradley's employment at the Imperial War Museum is that when he became Director-General and Accounting Officer, nobody assumed the roles of Curator and Secretary.

Rather, throughout his tenure as chief executive, Bradley held all four positions simultaneously.¹⁰

It goes without saying, therefore, that together, these roles afforded him considerable

discretionary decision-making capabilities and broad, direct responsibility. Drawing on Child's

(2005: pp. 6-9, 12) terminology, retaining those previous positions eventually made Bradley, as

an agent, a *critical structural component*, with responsibility for setting the rules, systems and

standards of the museum and controlling their application. It also explains why so many documentary sources cited in this

study derive from him and, through doing so, the biographical quality the study sometimes attains. Consequently, owing to the lack of sources attributable to

other actors at the Imperial War Museum over the period under consideration, actions considered herein are framed as being taken by the institution.

*Figure 2 – Leslie Ripley Bradley.
Copyright status unknown. Sourced
from the Times (anon. 1968).*

¹⁰ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 17th Annual Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees, 1933-1934', pp. 1-2; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 18th Annual Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees, 1934-1935', pp. 1-2; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 19th Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees for the Years 1935-1936 and 1936-1937', pp. i-ii; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 20th Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees', pp. i-ii; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 21st Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees', pp. i-ii.

5.3.3 Staffing

Above Bradley, occupying the first tier, sat the Trustees: ‘a body corporate [...] with perpetual succession and a common seal, and power to acquire and hold land without licence in mortmain’ (*Imperial War Museum Act 1920*). These were the guardians of the Imperial War Museum who acted ‘on the authority’ of the *Imperial War Museum Act 1920* (IWM 2020: p. 54).¹¹ As the most senior agents, responsibility for setting its course, policies and agenda lay with them, their interests usually being represented by a Standing Committee which met on four occasions during 1939 (Child 2005: pp. 6, 9, 11).¹² Below Bradley, occupying the third tier, were six departmental managers, each deputised by an assistant, excepting the Superintendent.¹³ These were specialist personnel who focussed their energies undertaking the work of the department in which they were based (*ibid.*: pp. 6, 10-11; Schlatter 2016). Occupying the fourth and fifth tiers, below the Superintendent, sat up to 56 staff comprising around 50 men and 6 women: on the fourth tier a Foreman and Assistant Foreman, and on the fifth tier Museum Attendants, a Repairer and Map Mounter, a Carpenter and two

¹¹ *Ibid.*; IWM, MA, EN2/1/STA/009/4, typed letter, anon. to Stokes, 11 January 1945, p. 1.

¹² IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/004/7, typed letter, Forsdyke to Bradley, 5 February 1941; IWM, MA, EN1/1/COB/049, see meeting minutes contained therein for the four meetings held over 1939.

¹³ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, ‘Imperial War Museum: 17th Annual Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees, 1933-1934’, pp. 1-2; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, ‘Imperial War Museum: 18th Annual Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees, 1934-1935’, pp. 1-2; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, ‘Imperial War Museum: 19th Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees for the Years 1935-1936 and 1936-1937’, pp. i-ii; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, ‘Imperial War Museum: 20th Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees’, pp. i-ii; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, ‘Imperial War Museum: 21st Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees’, pp. i-ii.

Women Cleaners.¹⁴ These were the support staff (Schlatter 2016). Their work revolved around performing schedules towards the upkeep and operation of the museum: invigilation, cleaning, maintenance, etcetera (Child 2005: pp. 7, 12).

The nature of Bradley's employment effectively removed an entire tier of middle management from the organisation. While this may have provided departmental managers with the potential to operate their respective departments as they saw fit, it more likely resulted in power being centralised and consolidated around him. It also ensured that he, in his capacity as Curator, was responsible for integrating and coordinating the activities of the museum (*ibid.*: pp. 8, 12-13). Either way, flatter organisational structures such as this can be very beneficial. It devolves organisational decision making to the staff who carry out the work, making them more accountable for their actions. It also breaks down stratified departmental boundaries, thereby potentiating better internal organisational collaboration. Yet any museum considering transferring from a hierarchical personnel structure to a more horizontal one should consider whether the organisation can afford the change. Despite the benefits such basic structures can provide, the process by which this arrangement is achieved – effectively removing the middle management, often senior curators – may have negative consequences for the museum. After all, it can potentially result in the museum losing the knowledge, skills and experience possessed by the personnel who once held those middle management positions. As Genoways and Ireland (2003: p. 40) warn: 'These are staff members whose knowledge museums can ill afford to lose'. In the case of the Imperial War Museum during the 1930s however, such concerns were less pronounced, what with Bradley's retention in the institution and, most importantly, his various middle management roles.

As with all comparable organisations, the Imperial War Museum incentivised its agents by rewarding them for their labours towards realising its aims and objectives (Child 2005: pp. 8, 13). The nature of the reward however

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

depended on the individual agent and their position. For the Trustees, this comprised the socio-cultural capital that holding such positions afforded them, a trusteeship being an entirely voluntary role (Miller 2018: p. 15). For the rest, the basic reward was remuneration at varying rates. Those of seniority could also be rewarded with nomination to the civil service, which offered benefits such as greater job and pension security (Chapman 2004: pp. 41-45).

5.3.4 Departments

The six specialist departments which Bradley oversaw were Finance; Library; Works of Art, Medallions, Maps, Air Photographs, War Currency and Stamps; Photographic Records Section; Stores and Subordinate Staff; and Dark Room.¹⁵ Excepting the Stores and Subordinate Staff departments, which employed the majority of the museum's staff, each department comprised just two personnel: a manager – often called an 'officer',¹⁶ to use the museum's own terminology – who looked after it, and an assistant.¹⁷ The museum's roster also lists a typist and two shorthand typists without any clear departmental affiliation.¹⁸ Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that these typists worked across all of

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ IWM, EN1/1/STA/004, see documents contained therein.

¹⁷ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 17th Annual Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees, 1933-1934', pp. 1-2; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 18th Annual Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees, 1934-1935', pp. 1-2; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 19th Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees for the Years 1935-1936 and 1936-1937', pp. i-ii; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 20th Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees', pp. i-ii; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 21st Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees', pp. i-ii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the departments including with the Director-General, for very little bureaucratic documentation preserved in the archives has been handwritten.

5.3.5 Relationships

Over its development the Imperial War Museum had created a culture of fostering and maintaining relationships and interactions with other organisations. These can be extremely beneficial to the museal ecology. They foster opportunities for bilateral exchange of knowledge, skills, experience and support (Ambrose and Paine 2018: pp. 370-374). Such examples from the Imperial War Museum during the 1930s include those with the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, which advised the government on national museum and gallery matters (Carlisle 1991); the Museums Association, which promoted professional standards in museums (Lewis 1989); and, of course, museums themselves: national museums such as the British Museum, Science Museum and the National Maritime Museum; provincial museums such as the London Museum, Bethnal Green Museum; and those from overseas, such as the Australian War Memorial.¹⁹ Interestingly, the directors of two other national museums, the British Museum and the Science Museum, were also Trustees of the Imperial War Museum.²⁰ This arrangement may have been made to compensate for the limited museological expertise there as discussed below.

Of equal importance were the Imperial War Museum's relationships and interactions with the government ministries and departments responsible for supporting the museum and/or appointing its Trustees. These ensured the

¹⁹ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUSG/005, see documents contained therein; IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUSG/016, see documents contained therein; IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUSG/013, see documents contained therein; IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUSG/011, see documents contained therein; IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUSG/006, see documents contained therein; IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUSG/021, see documents contained therein.

²⁰ IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/040, see documents contained therein; IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/049, see documents contained therein.

organisation remained operational both in the present and the future. The two most significant relationships were those maintained with the Treasury and the Office of Works, which became the Ministry of Works during 1940. Although the museum had officially been constituted as an independent government department, it was legally required to defer much of its autonomy to the Treasury.²¹ In this sense, the Treasury effectively monopolised the museum, being responsible not only for funding the museum, but also for appointing 11 of the museum's 24 Trustees (*Imperial War Museum Act 1920*). The Office and later Ministry of Works had responsibility for overseeing the maintenance and development of the museum's premises as a public building. Its ministerial head also sat on the Board of Trustees in an *ex officio* capacity (*ibid.*). Other governmental ministries or departments which the museum maintained a close relationship with were the War Office, the Air Ministry, the Colonial Office and the India Office, whose ministerial heads selected one Trustee each; and the Admiralty and the Board of Education, whose executive committees also had responsibility for selecting one Trustee each (*ibid.*).

One particular relationship fostered over the 1920s and 1930s provides an interesting example of organisational boundary crossing discussed above. As Child (2005: p. 8) remarks, this was unusual at the time. On being formally established in 1920, the Imperial War Museum became responsible for the care and preservation of the country's official war cinematograph films – a new and exciting yet hazardous technology through being highly flammable. Not having the skills to undertake this work however, the museum was forced to outsource it to the government's cinematography advisor, Edward Staple Foxen Cooper, then based at the Foreign Office. The arrangement quickly evolved. After several few months, the museum formally employed Foxen Cooper on a part-time basis, shared with the Foreign Office and HM Customs and Excise, until he retired in 1934 (Smither and Walsh 2000: p. 188-189). No documentation has

²¹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/STA/009/4, typed letter, anon. to Stokes, 11 January 1945, p. 1.

been found to indicate whether Foxen Cooper was replaced thereafter. Indeed, it suggests the skills he brought with him had been absorbed over his tenure. This is posited because after Bradley retired as Director-General in 1960, the Trustees retained Bradley's services on a part-time basis to rationalise the Imperial War Museum's film collection, requiring those skills (Frankland 1998: p. 165).

5.3.6 Public interaction

Much the same can be written about the attitude of the Imperial War Museum towards the public at large. Integral to the organisation's public profile and legitimacy were the relationships it founded with organised groups from its constituencies. There are numerous examples recorded in documentation held by IWM's Museum Archive, for example, of interaction onsite between the museum and the armed services, schools, service associations and youth organisations – groups which would often visit the museum for instructional and/or recreational purposes. Eager to be used, the museum became receptive to requests for assistance by core and other constituency groups which might see that outcome realised and would try to facilitate them where it could.²² Museums can often seem like unattractive, hostile or irrelevant amongst different communities (Hooper-Greenhill 1994: p. 20). By engaging with many constituency groups such as schools and service associations, the Imperial War Museum could potentially extend its reach to previously untouched constituents.

Aside from establishing and maintaining relationships with constituency groups, the Imperial War Museum also developed an ethic of interacting with constituents individually. It did this by rigorously responding to enquiries received both through the post and by telephone.²³ The voluminous collection of public correspondence for the period which this study covers preserved in IWM's Museum Archive comprises a remarkable source of social history. They

²² IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUS/024, see documents contained therein.

²³ *Ibid.*

convey information about people and their emotions that cuts through the bureaucratic material largely comprising the preserved documentation. What is so striking from reading them is the extent to which the museum would respond with personalised messages. Even the most mundane and monotonous enquiry, such as those requesting the museum's opening times and facilities, were usually answered by the Director-General himself, or at least in his name.

5.4 The Imperial War Museum as a Museum

5.4.1 Museum collections and exhibitions

Museums have been presented in chapter four (see subsection 4.2.4) as diverse entities which variously preserve and present the material and intangible culture of society. This means that no two museums are the same. But when stripping back any museum to its most essential features, two commonalities can usually be observed. The first is a collection of heritage assets acquired from the social system (Campbell and Baars 2019: p. xvi). The second is a series of exhibitions which present those assets to the public (Lord, Gail Dexter 2001: p. 1).

As caretakers of society's history and heritage, museums collect and preserve material that represents the lived environment, both social and scientific. These *objects* form the basis for museum collections, which museums hold in trust. There are multiple typologies of objects comprising museum collections. Suzanne Keene (2015: pp. 26-31) identifies four main examples applied in this study. These include objects for visual enjoyment, functional objects, objects for research, and place- and people-based objects. A recently arising fifth typology concerns virtual objects, however these are not considered herein (*ibid.*: p. 31). Few collections comprise just one typology. Many museums, no matter their subject remit, possess material drawn from all four.

Objects for visual enjoyment are those which have been collected to please the eye. They often feature in fine and decorative art collections but could conceivably feature in any collection with aesthetic appeal (*ibid.*: p. 27). Functional objects, by contrast, are those which have been collected to

demonstrate practical use or design. They often feature in industrial collections of machinery such as boats, vehicles or aeroplanes, or design collections of fine pieces of precision engineering such as time pieces and instruments (*ibid.*: pp. 27-29). Objects for research, by contrast again, are primarily those which have been collected to be studied rather than exhibited. They often comprise archives or *de facto* archives, which raises important questions about what comprises an object, and whether an accession comprising multiple pieces represents one object or more (*ibid.*: p. 29). For this study, an object is any sole or assembled item that has been selected to be preserved. And finally, place- and people-based objects, by contrast again, are those which have been collected because they support a museum's *raison d'être* and rationale. They often represent the bulk of most museum collections (*ibid.*: pp. 29-31). It is important to emphasise that an object will not necessarily embody one typology. A place- and people-based object could also comprise a functional object, a functional object could also comprise an object for visual enjoyment, and an object for visual enjoyment could also comprise an object for research. This potential overlap means that some objects could, theoretically, embody three typologies or more.

Museum exhibitions help museums fulfil their role as caretakers of society's history and heritage. They are key markers in determining a museum's performance, and regularly subject to review by critics, professionals and journalists (see art supplements in newspapers, the *Museums Journal* and tourist websites for examples). Through producing exhibitions, museums can demonstrate responsible stewardship of collections. They can also facilitate public access to them at varying levels. Both these are important for demonstrating institutional and organisational legitimacy (Dean 1997: p. 2).

Exhibitions can be effective, informative and efficient mediums. They can also be outlets for great ingenuity and creativity (Ashford 1998). The success or failure of a museum exhibition however hinges on its design. This not only facilitates an exhibition's presentation but is also key in crafting and transmitting an exhibition's messages, and whether and how those messages are

received. There exist many considerations that must therefore be engaged with when curating an exhibition. They include the hosting museum's mission, values and vision; the available space; the environment; the narrative being told; the objects identified for display, their contribution to the narrative and arrangement in the space; the methods of interpretation; lighting, sound and other sensory attributes; etcetera (Bogle 2013). All these will greatly impact on an exhibition's dynamics, with the slightest imbalance potentially ruining the visitor experience.

This observation about the fundamentality of collections and exhibitions to museums is not novel. By 1939, the museum sector in the United Kingdom had slowly mutated into a sector with basic professional attributes and standards recognisable today. This progress came about following the foundation of the Museums Association via three reviews conducted into museums and museum practice which heavily influence its direction (Pearson 2017: p. 45; see Miers 1928; Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries 1928; Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries 1929; Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries 1930; Markham 1938). Improvements were recommended to museum facilities, exhibition quality and variety, and opening hours, especially regarding provincial museums (*ibid.*: 29-30, 39).

These reports identified collections and exhibitions as being key elements of museums. In particular, the Miers (1928) and Markham (1938) reports were at pains to point out the importance of fostering rational collections and good quality exhibition practices. Miers (1928: p. 31) did this by stating that: 'Museums may be regarded as existing for the purpose of storing, exhibiting and utilising objects of cultural and educational value'. Markham (1938: pp. 8-9) designated the collection and preservation of objects and, what he called, the development of 'visual education' as being the first and third great functions of museums, the second being research. He also acknowledged the perception that the third function was 'now growing so greatly important that it completely overshadows the other two in the public mind' (*ibid.*: p. 9).

5.4.2 Collection

As an active museum on the First World War, the Imperial War Museum admitted new place- and people-based objects specifically from or concerning the events of 1914-1918 over the interwar years ranging from *matériel* and items from social life, to artwork and books. These also included functional objects, objects for visual enjoyment, and objects for research (Keene 2015: pp. 26-31). Information on each accession can be found in the annual reports, with articles on the most interesting being publicised in the *Museums Journal* (see, for example, anon. 1936; anon 1938a; anon. 1938b).²⁴ But the extent of this collection work never equalled that undertaken by the organisers over the museum's foundation. This is because the material held at the Imperial War Museum throughout the interwar years was largely amassed during 1917-1920 via a contemporary collecting programme. Such programmes are instigated by museums so they can collect items from society in the moment during some protracted phenomenon (Rhys 2011). They secure the 'raw materials' (Tosh 2002: pp. 54-82) that facilitate the development of history for future generations

²⁴ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/004, typed report, 'Report of the Imperial War Museum, 1920-1921'; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/005, typed report, 'Fifth Report of the Imperial War Museum (Second Report of the Board of Trustees), 1921-1922'; IWM, MA, typed report, EN1/1/REP/006, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 6th Annual Report (3rd Report of the Board of Trustees), 1922-1923'; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/007, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 7th Annual Report (4th Report of the Board of Trustees), 1923-1924'; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/008, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 8th Annual Report (5th Report of the Board of Trustees), 1924-1925'; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/009, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 9th Annual Report, 1925-1926'; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/010, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 10th Annual Report, 1926-1927'; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/011, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 11th Annual Report, 1927-1928'; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/012, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 12th Annual Report, 1928-1929'; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/013, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 13th Annual Report, 1929-1930'; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/015, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 14th Annual Report, 1930-1931'; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, see typed reports contained therein.

(Sullivan 2020; see Hannan and Longair 2017). Formal contemporary collecting programmes benefit museums because, as Owain Rhys and Zeldia Baveystock (2014: p. 15) explain, amongst other reasons, they ‘capture a fuller more nuanced record of society whilst material is abundantly available’. This includes the provenance and other contextual information surrounding the collected objects – the stories associated with them which transform specimens to objects with an interesting past, historically very much the focus maintained by the Imperial War Museum (Cornish 2004: pp. 37-40) – that becomes murkier the further the collector is from the events (see Milosch and Pearce 2019). Kavanagh argues that what the organisers achieved during those early years developed into the most comprehensive collection work undertaken towards a museum in the United Kingdom (1993: p. 16), and that their achievements have never been appreciated amongst subsequent generations curators (1988: p. 94).

The organisers of the Imperial War Museum had ambitious aspirations for its collection. Sir Martin Conway, its first Director-General, for example, had expressed early on in the organising phase his desire that they collect ‘not only every type of gun, but a type of each gun in the various stages of its development’ (quoted in Cornish 2004: p. 37). To assume from this however that the organisers envisaged a museum purely concerned with preserving and displaying *matériel* would be incorrect. By 1917, the United Kingdom was fighting the First World War on the home front and the front line. In doing so, the country had transitioned into a total war: where an entire nation and all its resources are engaged with the war effort, the enemy’s total capitulation (Uhle-Wettler 1994: p. 1047). The organisers therefore aimed not just to make the museum’s collection representative of the British military’s exploits *per se*, but rather the United Kingdom’s overall total war experience (Cornish 2004: p. 37).

This far-reaching ambition is demonstrated by the considerable number and variety of collecting subcommittees that the organisers established in 1917. They initially comprised the Admiralty, munitions, records and literature, Red Cross, War Office, and women’s work subcommittees. Later that same year, the

Red Cross subcommittee was dissolved, and the air services and dominions subcommittees created. The War Office subcommittee never really formed, and eventually became superseded by the War Office's own War Trophies Committee, which transferred to the organising committee. During 1918, an Art Committee was also formed. In addition, a Canadian Army officer called Major Henry Beckles Willson who had prior experience of staging war exhibitions for the Belgian and Canadian relief funds, received employment gathering suitable artefacts from Belgium and France (Kavanagh 1994: pp. 126-127). Although collection items were slow to amass at first, the various organisers attacked their task with much enthusiasm. Their persistence paid dividends. Through establishing official arrangements with government departments, and by making repeated public appeals, material started accumulating (*ibid.*: p. 131).

Such was the intended totality of the collection at the Imperial War Museum that the organisers sought material which would previously have been considered worthless, or even junk (Cornish 2012: p. 158), but which is now considered fundamental by social history museums (Kavanagh 1993: 20). This has led Malvern (2000: p. 188) to consider the collection as 'an ethnographic collection for the display of the British nation-in-arm'. Paul Cornish (2004: p. 37), however, notes that the systematic collecting necessary in achieving the organising committee's aspirations, as discussed by Susan M. Pearce (1992: pp. 84-88), was impossible. This is supported by the fact that many ephemeral items from 1914-1915 remained uncollected into the Second World War years.²¹

The organisers of the Imperial War Museum were not only interested in functional objects and object for study. As already indicated, they also sought objects for visual enjoyment (see Keene 2015: pp. 26-31). In fact, some more renowned items acquired over its foundation were artworks. This decision meant that the Imperial War Museum developed into an extensive gallery of modern art as well as a museum to war and armed conflict (Malvern 2000: p. 188).

The formation of its art collection began at the county's propaganda bureau Wellington House during 1916 (Wellington 2017: 108). This derived

from increased demand for visual propaganda and records with the impending onset of conscription the same year, the military's hostility towards photography near the frontline, and perception of a dearth of 'interesting art' in the capital's art institutions (Malvern 2004: p. 14). During 1917, an agreement had been reached between the organising committee and the Department of Information – which had replaced Wellington House – that the latter's eventual collection would be transferred over to the Imperial War Museum (Kavanagh 1994: p. 138). This agreement came in doubt however when the Department of Information was replaced with the Ministry of Information, headed by William Maxwell Aitken, 1st Baron Beaverbrook – a known opponent of the museum – who also established British War Memorials Committee for commissioning commemorative war art (Wellington 2017: p. 114). To avoid ending up with no art at all, therefore, the organising committee initiated their own collection.

The organising committee commissioned eyewitness paintings and drawings through various subcommittees (Kavanagh 1994: p. 139). Whereas the propaganda/memorial collection focussed on art depicting the Western Front, the Imperial War Museum collection was concerned with art depicting war on the sea and in the air (*ibid.*). It also included art depicting women's work and detailed technical drawings (*ibid.*). In the end, however, fears over Beaverbrook proved unwarranted, as they did receive the propaganda/memorial collection (Malvern 2004: p. 71). This left the Imperial War Museum by 1919 with no fewer than 3000 individual artworks (Fox 2015: p. 134). Consequently, Malvern (2000: p. 188) argues that throughout the interwar years, the Imperial War Museum held 'the most significant and important collection of modern British art in the country', more comprehensive than the holdings of the Tate Gallery.

5.4.3 Exhibitions

From the beginning the Imperial War Museum used its collection to create informative and emotive exhibitions. Early reviews suggest that the sight of the material on display succeeded in producing dynamic sensorial experiences

(Cundy 2017b: pp. 363-364). At the Crystal Palace, for example, a free flowing, open plan gallery was produced, with three principle exhibitions concerning the army, navy and air force positioned in the centre of the nave. Surrounding these existed various separate, smaller exhibitions, enclosed in their own alcoves. Those that concerned themes with clear links to the army, navy, or air force, such as the merchant navy, anti-aircraft defences and trench warfare, were positioned alongside their respective central exhibition. Those which concerned themes without clear linkages or themes considered less cogent to the main narrative however were displayed on the peripheries, examples being the medical services, veterinary section and women's work (Cundy 2015b: 253; Bogle 2013). The historical objects located in these exhibitions often shared their space with artworks. Indeed, art had an important interpretive function at the Imperial War Museum. While some, usually those from the propaganda/memorial collection, were hung separately in dedicated 'art galleries', others, those commissioned by the museum, were hung alongside the *matériel* to help demonstrate their functionality (Malvern 2000: pp. 188-189; Bogle 2013). As a result, Malvern (2000: p. 188) suggests that these latter examples constituted more photographs and labels than art in the traditional sense: 'They did not, and could not, connote the "aesthetic"'. This general description represents the form that the museum's exhibitions took over the first forty years (Condell 2002: p. 31). It is also arguably representative of the level of museal training and technical abilities of the staff employed there, these being mostly ex-service personnel, not trained curators. Until Noble Frankland's tenure as Director-General in 1960, the museum preferred employing ex-service personnel for their experience of war (Charman 2008: p. 104).²⁵

The exhibitions at the Imperial War Museum drew significantly on the stories associated with the historical objects they presented. Many of the

²⁵ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MINI/002, see documents contained therein; IWM, MA, EN2/1/STA/009, see documents contained therein.

integrant exhibit pieces, such as ephemera and equipment, comprised one of thousands of identical examples in a series. What made the museum's specimens significant however compared with others was their provenance. Accordingly, a desire for reliable provenance steered the organisers' collecting (Cornish 2004: pp. 37-40). It could even be said that the objects and even the exhibitions and the museum comprised merely conduits for stories. This idea has previously been alluded to in a recent marketing video by IWM entitled *Flight of the Stories*, where quotation marks are depicted as flying like birds away from the battlefields of continental Europe over the English Channel towards London and the museum's building, eventually resting outside on its iconic roof, naval guns, and gardens (IWM 2014). Exhibits holding verified stories, especially those with gravitas or perceived importance, were sometimes exhibited separate from the main displays. This approach, as identified by Cundy (2015b: pp. 254-255), highlighted the artefacts' historical significance and boosted their affective resonance. In the case of the gun from L Battery discussed above, she explains its potential to induce commemorative responses was harnessed through emphasising the 'loss and heroism' surrounding the object, this quality having been drawn out by the object's spatial proximity to the cenotaph (*ibid.*).

When the Imperial War Museum moved to the Imperial Institute in 1924, the limited space available there inhibited the museum from undergoing expansion. This however did not prevent it from maintaining a creative curatorial mindset. In fact, the spatial limitations prompted the museum to think more creatively about how it should interpret its ideas and objects in exhibition format. One example of this creativity can be seen with the use of moving images. The museum employed two Mutoscopes to display various flick book style films, with nine programmes available. Smither and Walsh (2000: pp. 193-194) suggest this was the first occasion where moving images have been used as an interpretive device in a museum setting. Another example can be seen with the recreation of a trench dugout using material scavenged from local waste

ground (Cornish 2004: p. 46). These resulted in two effective interpretation devices and core technologies in future exhibition design (Bogle 2013).

As discussed above, the exhibitions of Imperial War Museum had changed little over its three pre-Second World War presentations. At the former-Bethlem Royal Hospital, material continued to be arranged around the three core themes of the army, naval and air services (Foster 1936: pp. 220). Figures 3, 4 and 5 depict these galleries around the opening of the museum in Southwark. Moreover, the museum maintained a static collection and exhibition policies, meaning that the exhibitions presented themes and material from a strictly limited period. Yet the museum's exhibitions were not stagnant. The three annual reports preceding the Second World War portray a year-on-year process of modification and alteration across the gallery displays.²⁶ During the financial year 1938-1939, for example, the museum made no fewer than 16 alterations. Most seemingly represent little more than an attempt to enrich the exhibitions through the addition of two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects. The rationale behind the following two though warrants closer attention. The first change was made to the German Army Gallery. This comprised the addition of a rectangular ochre wooden shop shutter taken from Metz-en-Couture in France by British soldiers on 4 April 1917. Across the shutter was inscribed a derisory and racist poem, painted in English with black lettering, by somebody from the retreating German forces before they departed the village:

You crie [*sic*]: Poor little Belgium!

Poor Ireland you don't care,

²⁶ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 19th Annual Report of the Director-General and of the Curator and Secretary to the Board of Trustees for the years 1935-1936 and 1936-1937'; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 20th Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees, 1937-1938'; IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 21st Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees'.



Figure 3 – The Army Gallery at the Imperial War Museum, c. 1937. © IWM (Q 61184)

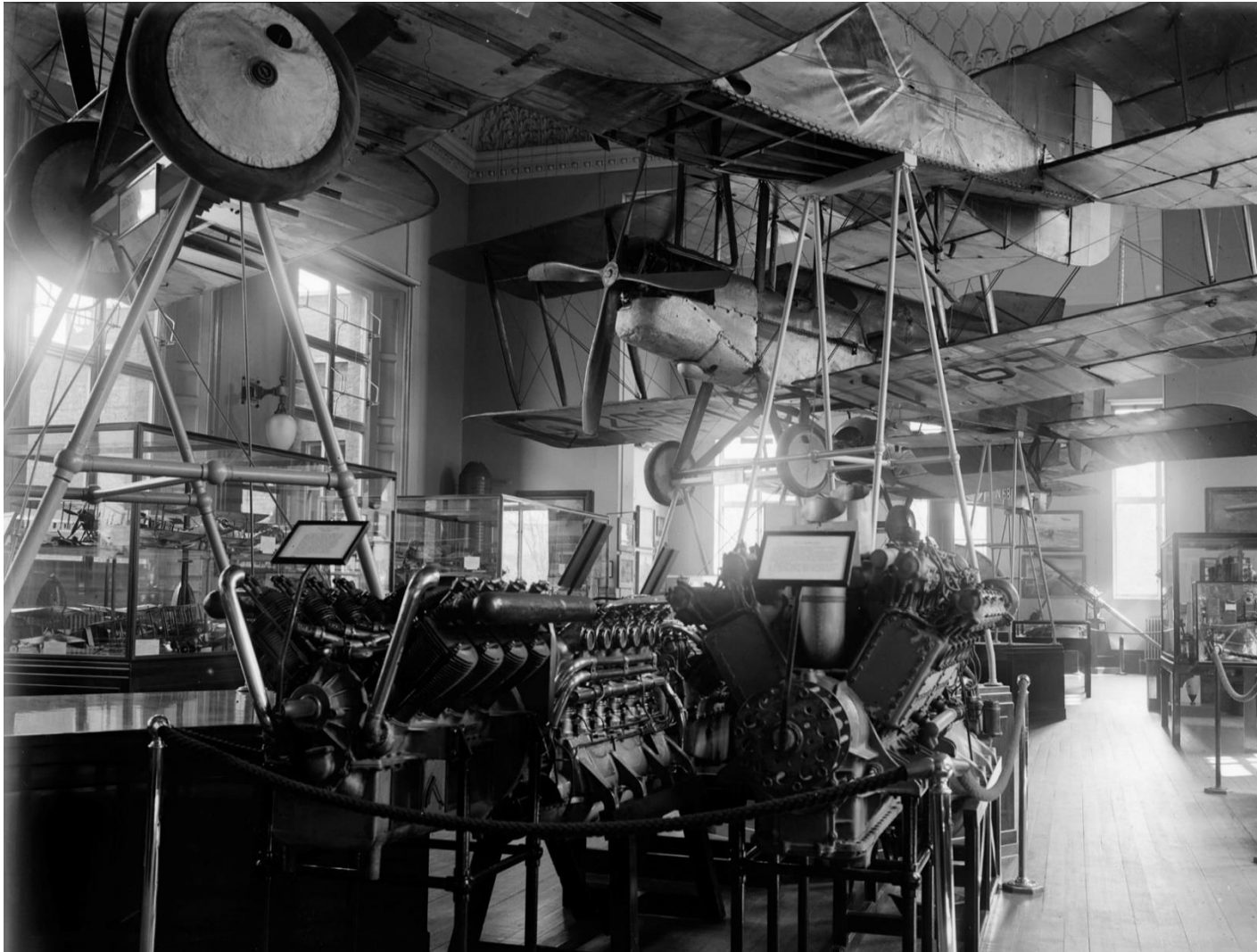


Figure 4 - The Air Services Room at the Imperial War Museum, c. 1937. © IWM (Q 61377)

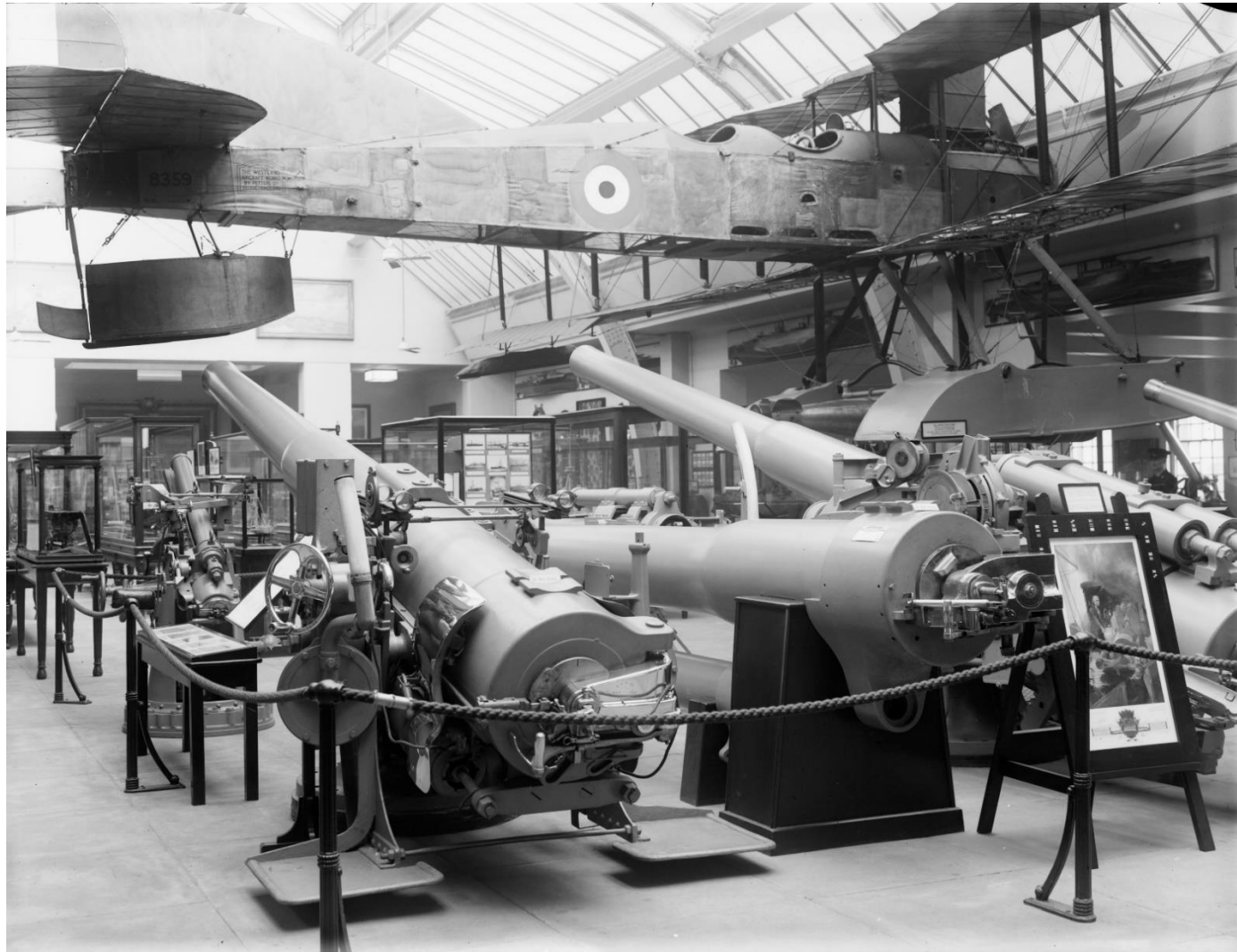


Figure 5 – The Naval Gallery at the Imperial War Museum, c. 1937. © IWM (Q 61183)

Protecting culture God and law
You brought the n[...] there.
I know you're always hypocrites
Now hear, what I you tell:
Our Germany will go to head
But you oh, go to hell!!
With every good wish for a Happy Xmas
Und bright New Year at Metz e.C.

Yours truly, German.²⁷

The second change occurred in the Prisoners of War and War Souvenirs Gallery, where recruitment adverts from the First World War were displayed on the walls. The material included posters such as 'Remember Belgium: Enlist Today' and 'Daddy, what did you do in the Great War?' by printer Henry Jenkinson and artist Savile Lumley respectively. Also included was the original black and white paint and graphite picture by Alfred Leete that adorned the front cover of 5 September 1914 edition of the *London Opinion*, famously depicting the head, outstretched arm and pointing finger of Britain's Secretary of State for War from 1914 to 1916, Horatio Herbert Kitchener, 1st Earl Kitchener, with 'Your Country Needs You' printed beneath him (Taylor 2013: pp. 11-12).²⁸

The precise motivation for these amendments can only be speculated on. But that is not what makes them significant. Rather, their significance lies in what the amendments reveal about the attitude of the Imperial War Museum towards its exhibitions. Firstly, they show that the museum, despite maintaining a static collection and exhibition policy, was concerned with ensuring the exhibitions were enhanced, freshened up, and curated so the issues and ideas

²⁷ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 21st Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees', p. 4.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

presented therein bore relevance to current affairs. Secondly, it shows that the museum did not shy away from addressing provocative issues. At a time when many of its constituencies would have been anti-war, displaying recruitment posters and an exhibit inciting anti-Germanic sentiments was a bold move. And thirdly, it shows that the museum approached curation pragmatically. Despite protests by Leslie Bradley, the second Director-General, about the public attending the museum for purposes that were fundamentally incompatible with its mission as discussed above, the museum nevertheless responded by addressing the theme of their visits by updating their exhibitions accordingly.

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

Over its first 19 years of operation the Imperial War Museum developed into a purposeful institution, organisation and museum. Resulting from an initiative that was part propaganda, part sincere attempt to document the world was fought over the years 1914-1918, it became an international centre for the study and remembrance of the ‘war to end all war’. The museum achieved this by performing two tasks. The first task was to inform the public about the conflict. The second was to commemorate those who had fought and died in it from the homeland, dominions, and empire. Through the latter, the museum became a *de facto* centre for national and imperial commemoration.

Founded as a regulative institution to reinvigorate the British war effort, the Imperial War Museum soon developed into a normative institution to profile the resulting sacrifice and instil an air of reverence in remembrance. Simultaneously, it gradually embodied a cultural-cognitive institution as the museum increasingly represented society’s developing views about the ‘war to end all war’. Accordingly, from starting out as an instrument for furthering war before morphing into one that conciliated victim families in its aftermath, the Imperial War Museum transitioned into one which admonished war’s repetition, becoming, what Apsel (2016: p. 12) describes as, an early peace museum, where the benefits of peace were shown through profiling the horrors of war.

Over the interwar years the Imperial War Museum developed into an organisation with an unusual personnel management structure. Instructions from the Director-General eventually descended on departmental management through a limited hierarchy. This potentially enabled many more staff members than usual to be responsible for enacting museum policy. The staff themselves derived mostly from the armed forces. While often inexperienced in museum work, which showed through their consistently simplistic approach to exhibition design, they nevertheless conceived and implemented innovative ideas and practices. At the same time, the museum established relationships with both governmental and non-governmental organisations. The most important of these were the ones with the governmental ministries and departments which presided over, maintained, and facilitated the museum's constitution and work.

The Imperial War Museum developed into a physical institution with distinct organisational architecture. Excepting virtual organisation, which did not become possible for many museums until the 1990s (Byrne 1993), every component outlined through Child's (2005) conceptualisation of organisation is observable from the bureaucratic documentation preserved in its archive. A public body, the Imperial War Museum, as with most established organisations, had basic structure, operated on procedures and processes, and maintained alliances with other organisations, especially government departments. Unusually for historical organisations, it had even crossed organisational boundaries. In many ways, therefore, the essential features of the museum's organisational architecture are similar to those of organisations today, even if the technology incorporated has developed since the early-mid twentieth century.

Following 1933, the growing 'elephant in the room' at Imperial War Museum was its increasingly anachronistic subject remit: the First World War as the 'war to end all war'. This came about from being founded on static collection and exhibition policies which restricted the collecting and exhibition of material from 1914-1918 only. Fortuitously, the Imperial War Museum perceived its 'anachronisation' as the potential for another war intensified. The

exhibitions therefore were given subtle changes which reflected this situation. While continuing to pay lip service to its founding mission of representing the First World War as the ‘war to end all war’, the museum started departing from the philosophy by acknowledging the growing threat of another war.

Collecting and exhibitions were essential to Imperial War Museum. Its collection comprised heterogeneous material from the front line and the home front, amassed predominantly over 1917-1920. The diversity of the material gave the collection an ethnographic quality, comprising objects from each four object typologies identified by Keene (2015). In establishing this, the Imperial War Museum became a modern art gallery as well as a war museum, because the collection not only composed of historical objects, but artwork too. Moreover, its exhibitions were simple yet effective. The Imperial War Museum managed to produce exhibitions that conveyed messages through creative approaches to interpretation (Bogle 2013). This included employing new technologies such and experimenting with object placement.

This chapter takes the issues and ideas presented in chapter four (see section 4.2) on institutions, organisations, and museums, and applies them to the Imperial War Museum. Through doing so, it supports the thesis by making the two following essential points. The first is that the case bears many similarities with present-day museums. This legitimises the historical approach to the study. Despite regarding a situation that is, at time of writing, some 80 years old, there are multiple institutional, organisational and museological issues and ideas raised which still resonate today, and will likely do so for the foreseeable future (see Szántó 2020). Accordingly, this chapter shows the findings of this thesis to be applicable to museums facing crisis and change in the prevailing context. The second point is that over the interwar years the Imperial War Museum established a precedent for institutional, organisational and museological change. It acquired this through responding reflexively as society shifted, which the museum carried into the Second World War. The chapter therefore also shows how the Imperial War Museum was not unfamiliar with enacting change

to maintain societal relevance by 1939. This buttresses the argument made over later chapters that a similar strategy was deployed once the museum perceived the threat of cultural irrelevancy as the Second World War approached.

In the next chapter, this thesis explores the means by which the Imperial War Museum difficult situations such as change during the Second World War. It considers the concept of organisational resilience to adversity at the museum.

Chapter 6 Continuing a Civic Service, 1939-1945: Resilience at the Imperial War Museum

6.1 Chapter Introduction

The interwar Imperial War Museum was deconstructed over the previous chapter. Not just organisationally, but also institutionally and museologically. This is because crisis-conducive situations can have far reaching potentials and consequences for museums that transcends their physical instantiation (Alexander 2013). Indeed, the manifestation of crisis depends on the holistic form, or composition, that crisis objects take (Milstein 2015). For example, while a museum's physical assets and facilities, as with any organisation, will regularly succumb to crisis, these are not the only elements which can do so. Their metaphysical elements, such as their *raison d'être* and rationale, may be equally vulnerable (Devlin 2007). Through exploring the interwar Imperial War Museum as an institution, organisation, and museum therefore, the previous chapter profiled its holistic form, or composition, at the start of the Second World War before the various crises which the conflict instigated.

Having historically contextualised the Imperial War Museum during the previous chapter, I begin analysing the case proper towards answering this thesis' central question previously set out in chapter one (see section 1.1). As a result, it starts exploring how the Imperial War Museum survived the Second World War era physically intact and conceptually reborn. Over the current chapter, the thesis explicates the concept of organisational resilience to adversity formally introduced in chapter four (see section 4.5). It does so through considering work undertaken at the Imperial War Museum towards maintaining a civic service. As such, this chapter contributes to the overarching thrust of the thesis by exemplifying how resilience underlies all successful organisational response against challenging situations. That occurs while making a standalone contribution explicating and demonstrating the differentiation between crisis and other difficulties also introduced in chapter four (see subsection 4.3.3). In

undertaking the above, the chapter helps address aim three, objective one; and aim four, objectives one through three of this thesis.

Crisis has become synonymous with disruption (Han and Zhang 2013). As the definition of crisis provided in chapter four (see subsection 4.3.4) established, it comprises an unpredictable, unstable, and potentially dangerous situation, where the impacted museum or other systemic entity will be disrupted, perhaps inoperably and irreparably, requiring extraordinary intervention to be overcome. When museums become gripped by crisis, they can experience many and varied challenges to their short-, mid- and long-term operationality, necessitating them drawing on resilience. Yet the subjective nature of crisis previously discussed means that such situations will not necessarily be perceived as endemic throughout a museum which still requires recourse to resilience. Put another way, they will not necessarily be conceived as permeating the stated museum (Booth 2015: p. 108). It could be that a museum becomes impacted by a crisis in only specific or limited ways. The Imperial War Museum is an example of that possibility. While it did experience crisis-conducive conditions arising from the Second World War which caused significant disruption to the museum, the subject of subsequent chapters, not all the challenges faced there had such an outcome. Specifically, the civic service role of the museum continued unabated and despite the Second World War breaking out.

This chapter undertakes the above over five substantive sections. Its first, second and third sections (6.2, 6.3 and 6.4) introduce and explicate respectively the concepts of civic service and resilience. They set out these key concepts for use over the current chapter. The fourth and fifth substantive sections (6.5 and 6.6) then profile examples of civic service performed at the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War. The fourth section focuses on the public facing aspects, while the fifth section focuses on the non-public facing aspects.

6.2 Civic Service

The concept of *civic service* requires some elucidation. This is because it can mean different things to different people at different times depending on their views (Sherraden and Eberly 1982: p. 3). As James L. Perry and Ann Marie Thomson (2015: pp. xiv-xv) have identified, some people see civic service as, essentially, a private, informal, and voluntary initiative in response to specific need. Yet others see it as a public, formal, and institutionalised initiative towards attaining instrumental value (*ibid.*). Moreover, civic service can be discussed in relation to an individual person or group of people, or an organisation, and can also be seen as a derivative of, or alternative to, national or military service (see, for example, Leege 1988; Fairley 2006; Nesbit and Reingold 2011). This explains why Richard Danzig and Peter Szanton (1986: p. 10) view any attempt to define civic service as being ‘necessarily somewhat arbitrary’. It perhaps even explains why Peter Latchford (2018: p. 5) finds that ‘there is no formal UK civic museum category or definition’. Over the current chapter, therefore, a simple yet effective understanding of civic service is conceived to analyse the Imperial War Museum. This draws on ideas initially forwarded by Chris Brink (2018: p. 326) about universities and their purpose and legitimacy in society.

Civic has two meanings in British English. It primarily pertains to civil society. This derives from the Latin word *civitas*, which roughly means citizenry of a state (Hornblower, Spawforth and Eidinow 2012). But as Brink (2018: p. 326) points out, civic also pertains to town, city or local area. The *civic museum* therefore may mean two things. In the former sense, it could mean a museum which responds to the wants, needs and interests of society. In the latter sense, it could mean the museum of the town, city or other defined area wherein the museum is located. By synthesising both ideas together, an insightful definition presents itself for describing a museum’s civic service conveniently chiming with Latchford’s (2018: pp. 5-6) framing of the concept. This is a practicable service that supports the community wherein the museum resides by facilitating or positively enhancing the lives of its constituents and their support systems.

It would be impossible to analyse every instance of civic service performed by the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War and avoid treating them superficially or repetitively. There are too many instances. Consequently, several of the more impactful examples have been selected for analysis either alone or grouped under a theme. These include work by the museum to, firstly, produce an exhibition for the general public during the ‘Bore War’ period – commonly known by its Americanised name ‘Phoney War’ – in 1939-1940; secondly, interact with the public after air raids on London forced the museum’s closure; and thirdly, support the British war effort.

6.3 Resilience

This chapter considers the concept of organisational resilience, which is now expanded on. Resilience rarely appears during museum literature. The discussions which do take place however argue that museums can possess resilient qualities (Janes 2009; Geller and Salamon 2010; Janes 2011; Janes 2016; Decter 2018). As defined in chapter four (see section 4.5), this is the ability to withstand, recover from or adapt to difficult environmental conditions while still maintaining their functionality (*ibid.*: p. 21; Leflar and Siegel 2013: p. 11; McCarthy, Collard and Johnson 2017). While not crisis management *per se*, the innate qualities of resilience are often integral when managing crisis.

Resilience involves the ability of some entity to bounce back from adversity (Giustiniano *et al.* 2018: p. 14). In the organisational context, it comprises an organisation’s response to turbulence emanating from the inhabited social system (Starr, Newfrock and Delurey 2003). Ran S. Bhamra, Kevin Burnard and Samir Dani (2015: p. 18) explain this as involving ‘the capacity to adjust to a disturbance, moderate the effects, take advantage of any opportunities and cope with the consequences of any system transformations’. It is a quality facilitated by routine ‘interactions and behaviours’ (*ibid.*) including embracing new aims and objectives, watching out for new or emerging opportunities and adopting new capabilities (Anderson 2016: p. 99). Resilience

lies at the heart of organisational longevity. Museums which do not imbue much resilience are unlikely to exist for long, because they will not have the wherewithal to manage difficult situations. It follows, therefore, that museums draw on resilience when managing every difficult situation. As such, resilience is a concept that resurfaces throughout the rest of this thesis.

Two dominant conceptualisations of resilience have arisen in the prevailing discourse. Drawing on Bridgit Maguire and Sophie Cartwright's (2008) ideas, Keith Shaw and Louise Maythorne (2011) elucidate them as follows. The first is a process of 'recovery'. In this conceptualisation, resilience comprises the ability to withstand, or persevere through, turbulence emanating from the inhabited social system. The more unencumbered an entity remains by the turbulence, the greater its resilience (*ibid.*: p. 46). The second is a process of 'transformation'. In this conceptualisation, resilience comprises the ability to withstand turbulence emanating from the social system through adaptation. It is a process for ensuring that an entity can thrive in some new context, not just survive (*ibid.*). Mike Raco and Emma Street (2011: p. 1069) frame this as a 'radical' way of understanding resilience. That is because it rejects assumptions which hold an entity's pre-turbulence-paradigm to be anything other than flawed. As Richard J. T. Klein, Robert J. Nicholls and Frank Thomalla (2003: p. 42) posit: 'if a megacity is struck by a disaster, it follows that the original state was one in which it was vulnerable to the disaster in the first place'. Such ideas are, of course, contestable. After all, no organisation is infallible. Moreover, the effort of striving for infallibility would likely cripple an organisation, although obviously some preparation remains better than none. Nevertheless, it reminds that no organisation can enter a period of stasis and survive indefinitely. As discussed in chapter four (see subsection 4.2.3), organisations must update themselves against an evolving society to remain relevant and functional.

Organisations can develop resilience in various ways. The most commonly studied method is through tangible methods such as building and maintaining robust physical or semi-physical assets (Brown, Seville and Vargo

2017: p. 38). Without robust facilities and systems, organisations cannot easily operate in calm periods let alone periods which require drawing on resiliency. But these alone are not enough to ensure organisational resilience. Thomas W. Brit and Gargi Sawhney (2020: p. 15) conclude that it is in fact dependent on a number of different factors, including the intangible. Another method, therefore, involves employing organisational agents with desirable attributes (McManus *et al.* 2008). Staff who are knowledgeable of organisational systems, schedules, and routines; who are proactive, resourceful and creative; and who possess skills of troubleshooting and problem solving will go a long way to building an organisation's resilience (Mallak 1998; Lengnick-Hall and Beck 2009). But even then, these attributes will unlikely have impact unless supported. As John F. Horne III and John E. Orr (1998: p. 39) conclude: 'The challenge to organizations is to recognize that many of the resiliency factors are currently embedded in their people and processes awaiting a supportive push to surface them'. Consequently, a third method is establishing an environment wherein the desirable attributes of an organisation's agents can be nurtured and harnessed. Such outcomes are achieved through producing human resource management policies geared towards supporting the underpinning cognitive, behavioural and contextual elements that feed those attributes (Lengnick-Hall, Beck and Lengnick-Hall 2011). Previous research by Stephanie Lessans Geller and Lester M. Salamon (2010) reveal the capacity of museums to engage these methods.

6.4 Resilience Through Civic Service

In a serendipitous marrying up of the above ideas surrounding civic service provision and resilience, Robert R. Janes (2009: pp. 121-146) views delivering some civic service as being essential to ensuring museum resilience. Drawing on ideas by Stephen Weil (2002), he asserts: 'Survival [...] is not [the museum's] purpose' (Janes 2009: p. 142). This means that museums do not typically exist for the sake of existing. Rather, they invariably exist to perform a function for one or more civic communities (see Watson 2007). In this sense, to Janes

(2009), museum resilience relies on maintaining their civic service provision. Without possessing a civic service, the point of museums may come into question, and their legitimacy put in doubt. Concern for this is apparent, if not explicit, throughout the influential 1938 Markham Review by Sydney Markham, introduced during chapter five (see subsection 5.4.1). In his review, Markham made clear that the fundamental point of museums was to serve the public, whatever an individual's context. He also argued that museums should proactively address the cultural inequalities pervading society (Markham 1938: p. 174). This is significant, because it sets the civic service performed by the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era against a backdrop of broader museum sectoral recognition about the general need to serve society.

6.5 Public-Facing Civic Services at the Imperial War Museum

6.5.1 Producing a public exhibition

At the onset of the Second World War, the British government was concerned about aerial attacks on urban population centres. This prompted an enforced blackout and the closure of many public gathering places (Weingärtner 2012: p. 50; see Davies 2001: pp. 54-55; Aldgate and Richards 2007: p. 1; Pearson 2017: p. 67). But to the surprise of many, no bombs fell immediately. This resulted in the war during these early months being called the 'Bore War' through the fighting's perceived distance from the British Isles (Atkin, Biddiss and Tallett 2011: p. 320) and, perhaps, limited recreational facilities available (Mackay 2002: p. 50). After mounting protestations however, the government eventually reversed its decision (Weingärtner 2012: pp. 50-51). Accordingly, the country's museums reopened, thanks in part to lobbying from the Museums Association and the Standing Commission for Museums and Galleries.²⁹

²⁹ TNA, EB 3/17, typed letter, Markham to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, 2 November 1939; TNA, EB 3/17, typed report, 'The question of the reopening of the National Museums and Galleries', 20 December 1939.

The first national museum in London to readmit the public was the Victoria and Albert Museum, which reopened galleries on 11 January 1940 (anon. 1940a). Taking this action as their cue, the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum agreed that Leslie Bradley, its Director-General, should undertake similar preparations to reinstate some public-facing civic service by readmitting the public.³⁰ Such a directive can be associated today with organisational *business continuity*: the process and discipline of ‘avoid[ing] any interruption that could lead to either significant losses or failure to achieve the organisations principle objectives’ (Watters 2010: p. 9). Business continuity is key in developing organisational resilience. Whereas the latter concerns withstanding, recovering from or adapting to difficult or changing environmental conditions while still maintaining functionality – essentially strengthening the organisation’s holistic immunity – the former concerns the maintenance of critical organisational activities and everything involved with that (Mathenge 2020; see Loyear 2017: chapt. 8). For the Imperial War Museum, core business continuity initially involved curating an exhibition on the museum’s three ground floor galleries which could be accessed by the public at large.

The unnamed ‘Bore War exhibition’ that arose from this decision opened on 29 January 1940. It was curated using exhibits from the collection that had not yet been evacuated, including models, artefacts, artworks and documents, and displayed over the three main ground floor galleries: the Naval Gallery, the Army Gallery and the Picture Gallery depicted in Figure 6. The configuration and execution of this exhibition demonstrates organisational resilience at the Imperial War Museum in re-establishing a public-facing civic service. Around the Naval Gallery, visitors could see models of ships and boats, the actual Short Seaplane which flew at the Battle of Jutland, and specimens of weaponry such

³⁰ IWM, MA, EN1/1/COB/049/4, typed draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 7 December 1939, p. 3; IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/001/1, typed meeting minutes, Standing Committee, 11 January 1940, p. 1.

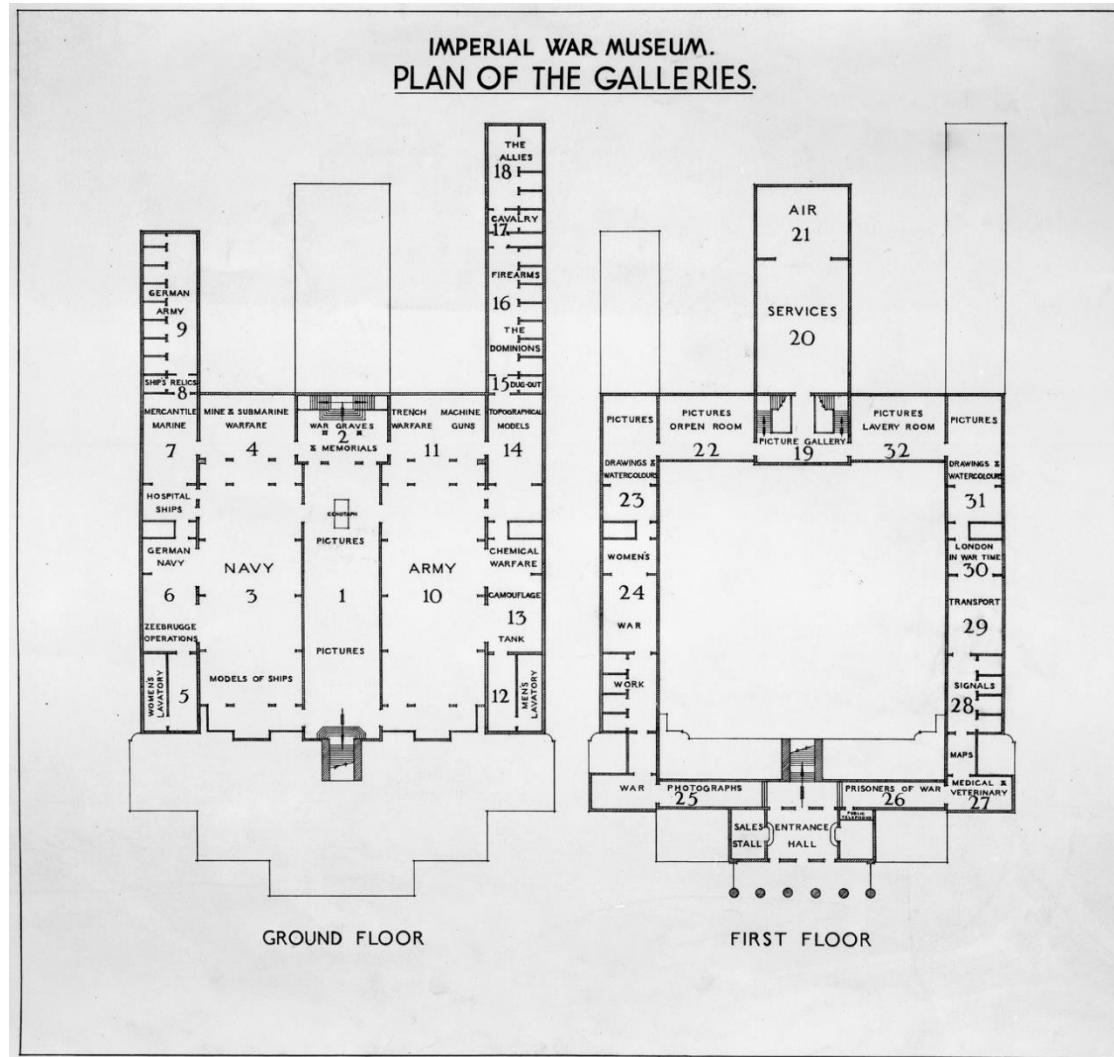


Figure 6 – A plan of the galleries of the Imperial War Museum, former-Bethlem Royal Hospital, 1936-1939. © IWM (Q 60569)

as torpedoes, mines and depth charges (Blaikley 1941a: p. 8).³¹ Alongside these were material pertaining to women's war work (*ibid.*). Around the Army Gallery, visitors could see artillery, camouflage and the personal equipment of soldiers (*ibid.*). Alongside these were various other items representing contraband, espionage and counter-espionage, diplomatic and military documentation, propaganda 'and a diversity of other objects' (*ibid.*). And around the Picture Gallery, visitors could see lithographs and drawings which conveyed anti-Germanic sentiment. Located across all three galleries, items from the Air Gallery situated on the floor above were also displayed (*ibid.*).³²

These displays comprised material almost exclusively relating to the First World War (*ibid.*). The two exceptions were a model of HMS *Ajax*, which had shot to public attention the previous month following its part in the victorious Battle of the River Plate (Landsborough 2016), and the infamous 'piece of paper' bearing Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler's signatures proclaiming 'peace in our time' (Faber 2009). The latter became an item of considerable interest to the public, with the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror* both publishing short articles solely notifying its readers about the opportunity to see it (anon. 1940b; anon. 1940c). Mollie Panter-Downes, a novelist and writer for the *New Yorker* (Beauman 2004), commented in an article following one visit there about the sense of irony felt by the document's presence (Panter-Downes 1972: p. 45).

Although little literature and no photographs from the exhibition seemingly remain, the *Museums Journal* (Blaikley 1941a) and *Times* (anon. 1940d) offer useful insights, particularly in regard to how the First World War material on display made vivid connections with the contemporary. The following are three examples. In the Naval Gallery, photographs depicted Hermann Göring, who during the Second World War held many senior political and military positions in the Nazi state, as commander of his German fighter

³¹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/004/7, typed letter, Bradley to Cubitt, 1 February 1941.

³² IWM, MA, EN1/1/COB/049/4, typed draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 7 December 1939, p. 3

wing during the First World War (Blaikley 1941a: p. 8). In the Army Gallery, gasmasks sat alongside other personal protective equipment from the First World War (*ibid.*). And in the Picture Gallery, a striking drawing by Henry Rushbury was displayed depicting Winston Churchill addressing an audience in Central Hall, Westminster, on 4 July 1918, including a quote from this speech inscribed underneath: ‘Germany must be beaten, must know she is beaten, must feel she is beaten!’ (*ibid.*: p. 9). The contemporaneous nature of this last exhibit is extraordinary. By February 1940, Churchill was not yet Prime Minister. He had however returned to government as First Lord of the Admiralty which he had also briefly been during the First World War. Churchill was a longstanding critic of Chamberlain’s policy of appeasement towards Nazi territorial ambitions (see Neville 2006), and often warned against treating Germany as harmless in a spirit that evoked the sentiment reproduced by Rushbury (Gilbert 1976). As the *Illustrated London News* commented during its article on the exhibition, the Churchill represented in the drawing bore an ‘almost identical’ resemblance to the Churchill who just one week prior had spoken in Manchester about the need to fight and win the war (anon. 1940e; see anon. 1940f).

Through drawing on the material and spaces at their disposal, the staff performed what has become known amongst organisational resilience theorists as *bricolage*: ‘the capacity to improvise and to apply creativity in problem-solving’ (Kendra and Wachtendorf 2003: p. 42) – a reuse of the term originally coined by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1966) for his monograph *The Savage Mind*. This activity might sound counterintuitive during such situations. But as Stephanie Duchek (2020: pp. 228-229) explains through drawing on ideas by Gene I. Rochlin (1989), Karl E. Weick (1993), Mathilde Bourrier (1996) and Karl E. Weick, Kathleen M. Sutcliffe and David Obstfeld (1999), it is important for facilitating organisational resilience. Bricolage unlocks an organisational agent’s skills from the constraints of their organisation’s conventions, enabling a reapplication of existing organisational knowledge and practices into novel combinations and configurations. These combinations and configurations go on

to form informal and temporary organisational structures, which serve to support the organisation through the turbulence emanating from the inhabited social system until normal operations can resume. In the case of the Imperial War Museum, this involved the staff synthesising knowledge and experience of previous exhibition practice with knowledge of the resources available to create a temporary exhibition which met the requirements of the museum while the Second World War inhibited its regular public engagement activities.

Accordingly, the museum's demonstration of resilience in this regard can be viewed as transformatory (Maguire and Cartwright 2008) although not necessarily radical, given its temporary nature (Raco and Street 2011). Previous research on museum resilience during austere periods supports the view that museums can exhibit such entrepreneurial-like behaviour when negotiating turbulence emanating from the social system (Geller and Salamon 2010).

Despite being on the First World War, this 'Bore War exhibition' was actually about the Second World War. As Earnest Blaikley (1941a: p. 8) shows in his article, 'the result is an extraordinarily vivid display which illustrates, at almost every point, the present wartime life of the community'. The *Times* similarly explained how 'exhibits with a particular bearing on the present-day war conditions have been selected for display' (anon. 1940c). The upshot of this was a relevant exhibition for public consumption. To achieve *relevance* is to 'yield[...] positive cognitive effect' (Simon 2016: p. 29). In the museum context, achieving relevance involves identifying external challenges and making positive differences against them (Koster and Baumann 2005: p. 86). The Imperial War Museum did this by guiding visitors towards *meaning-making* – the process whereby display material, such as objects, artwork or text, attains meaning to individual visitors (Weil 2002: p. 70) through synthesis of deliberate curatorial decisions and individual *visitor contexts*: the prevailing personal, sociocultural and physical circumstances accompanying them (Mason 2005) – which firstly encouraged them to form opinions legitimising Britain's involvement and secondly provided them with psychological nourishment.

Accordingly, it maintained a civic service through the exhibition as defined above, further demonstrating the museum's business continuity and resilience.

The opinion forming, or propagandist, aspect to the exhibition's meaning making derived from the curatorial framing of Germany. Indeed, it was framed here as a hawkish country which viewed its opponents with contempt. David Welch (2003: p. 318) describes *propaganda* 'as the deliberate attempt to influence public opinion through the transmission of ideas and values for a specific purpose'. That the overarching message of the exhibition was trying to be propagandist in its framing of Germany is evident from the range of collections on display and the way Blaikley (1941a) writes about them during his review for the *Museums Journal*: as epitomising authoritarian aggression and militarism. This idea is supported by the way the Imperial War Museum negatively evolved its interpretation regarding Germany following the war's onset. It seems that the museum's peacetime policy until the Second World War was to treat issues involving Germany un-antagonistically.³³ As Bradley informed one distressed German visitor who had taken offence at a display in 1933: 'We have endeavoured to avoid giving offence to our former enemies'.³⁴ But the declaration of war changed this policy. An object label placed alongside the Rushbury drawing, for example, stated, to quote Panter-Downes' (1972: p. 46) recollection, that 'until recently delicacy has prevented them from showing the drawing, but that they are doing so now because "the sentiments expressed in Mr. Churchill's speech have once more become appropriate and sensible"'.

The psychological nourishment aspect, by contrast, derived from its ability to contextualise and interpret the new war to the public. Over 1938-1940, the British population experienced what Julie Gottlieb (2017) has termed a *war of nerves*. She refers to the condition of society at the time as documented in Mass Observation Records characterised by nervous exhaustion developed from

³³ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943', p. 30.

³⁴ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUS/024/1, typed letter, Bradley to Rath, p. 1.

the worry and fatigue of the deteriorating European situation and the threats posed by another war with Germany (*ibid.*). Through providing people with an opportunity to understand the war, or more specifically the issues pertaining to it, the exhibition supported the public by offering a way for individuals to come to terms with the national situation and their position therein. This assertion draws on psychological theory concerning anxiety. Seeking knowledge about threats that are shrouded in ambiguity has long been observed to help reduce nervousness and unease caused from uncertainty (Silvia 2012). George Loewenstein's (1994: p. 87) argument for this occurrence is that inquisitiveness arises 'when attention becomes focussed on a gap in one's knowledge. Such information gaps produce the feeling of deprivation labelled *curiosity*. The curious individual is motivated to obtain the missing information to reduce or eliminate the feeling of deprivation'. Obviously, feelings of deprivation can take many, subjective forms. A good example is the anxiety that may occur when individuals find themselves deprived of enough information to maintain the feeling of agency over their lives: a lack of perceived control being understood as an underlying cause of anxiety (Barlow 2004: p. 256). With that in mind, the exhibition can be viewed as offering nourishment for the public psychological condition by nourishing its curiosity through interpreting the new war, its cause, and potential features, and thereby helping alleviate the public's war of nerves.

The Imperial War Museum demonstrates qualities from both 'recovery' and 'transformation' resilience through this example of reinstating some public-facing civic service (Shaw and Maythorne 2011). On one hand, it represents development on exhibition practice by addressing issues and ideas previously not engaged with by the museum. But on another, it represents continuation of existing exhibition practice by drawing on pre-existing display material and design (Condell 2002: p. 31). Consequently, the exhibition can be understood as a redisplay (Paddon 2016): new, yet familiar at the same time. It did not represent a 'revolution' (Knell, MacLeod and Watson 2007a) or 'reinvention' (Anderson 2012) of exhibition practice there, for these terms imply radical

change. Rather, it more represented ideas around resilience as forwarded by Janes (2009: p. 141) above, where some museum moves to accommodate the turbulence emanating from the inhabited social system, but without wholly changing their *raison d'être* and rationale. The 'Bore War exhibition' lasted just over eight months until 10 September when the Blitz forced the Imperial War Museum to close again, this time for the remaining duration of the war in Europe.³⁵ Despite its short existence, the exhibition proved popular. In total, 65,496 visitors attended.³⁶ This was despite a restriction imposed on public access by the Metropolitan Police and Borough of Southwark: namely that no more than 200 individuals could attend at any one time, that access was restricted to daylight hours and that, initially, the institution remained closed on Sunday.³⁷ Later, opening included Sundays.³⁸ It was reported to Southwark Town Clerk that on Easter Sunday 1,200 visitors had visited in just four hours.³⁹

6.5.2 Maintaining interaction with constituents

The Imperial War Museum was forced to close again on 10 September 1940. This occurred when a bomb fell near its vicinity without exploding. Accordingly, the local area went off-limits while the bomb was defused. The Imperial War Museum remained closed thereafter until the war's conclusion, the intensity of the Blitz rendering its building too unsafe.⁴⁰ The public could therefore not be readmitted on a regular basis. This posed a problem, as public

³⁵ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943', p. 10.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/003/1b, typed letter, Griffiths to Bradley, 11 December 1939; IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/003/1b, typed letter, Bradley to Griffiths, 6 March 1940.

³⁸ IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/003/1b, typed letter, Griffiths to Bradley, 19 March 1940.

³⁹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/003/1b, typed letter, Bradley to Griffiths, 26 March 1940.

⁴⁰ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943', p. 10.

interaction and audience/customer development is essential for museums (Hooper-Greenhill 1994), indeed any organisation (Jones 2001: p. 2). Without the legitimacy that comes from use by the public, institutions such as museums simply cease to exist (Berger and Luckmann 1991: p. 93; Hallett and Ventresca 2006: p. 215). The physical closure of the Imperial War Museum however did not stop it from interacting with the public. Interactions were reconfigured to take place using other methods not involving actual public admittance.

The first of two ways the Imperial War Museum overcame an inability to interact with constituents publicly was by doing so via written correspondence. While it had regularly received letters from the public before the war, those answered during the war assumed greater importance through ensuring the museum could stay connected. Fundamentally, organisational resilience is the ability to continue delivering a ‘required capability’ in the face of turbulence emanating from the social system: *capability* being ‘the ability to achieve a specific objective under stated conditions’ (Ferris *et al.* 2019: p. 1094). For the Imperial War Museum, this capability was its civic service, usually delivered through public facing activities. Now, however, it needed to be delivered through alternative means. As an organisation reliant on public interaction, that staff could immediately utilise another method of public interaction further is a demonstration of innate organisational resilience (Vincent, Burnett and Carthey 2013: p. 56). The museum could withstand the turbulence through engaging with constituents using unaffected means while additional methods were established. Correspondence preserved in the administrative archive suggests that the Imperial War Museum received heterogeneous enquiries. Each extant example includes a response signed by the Director-General, Leslie Bradley.⁴¹

Many letters received during the war comprised simple enquiries about whether the Imperial War Museum was open or not. A good portion, however, came from members of the public with other concerns. Some were quite

⁴¹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ENQ/001, see all sources contained therein.

irrelevant to the museum's general subject remit. On 28 March 1940, a man wrote 'to ask you if you could tell me the value of a tin box of 1 pound of chocolate which was given to my father by Queen Victoria at Christmas time in 1900'.⁴² Others embodied more cogent enquiries. On 15 June 1943, a soldier in the British Army wrote requesting information on the decorations worn by King George VI in military uniform 'in order to assist in a large coloured photo of H.M. which I am colouring'.⁴³ And a few comprised urgent pleas for assistance. On 17 October 1944, a woman wrote after 'a nephew of a friend' who had been a paratrooper on D-Day visited her 'with [...] several souvenirs + amongst them [...] a map which he had captured from a German [...] of the Southern Coast of England'.⁴⁴ This map, it seems, became lost while in her possession. She therefore wrote asking if anyone at the museum may 'have come in touch with, or are likely to come into touch with anyone owning a similar map, who would be prepared to sell it to me?'.⁴⁵ Each of these examples received a personal response from Bradley, offering support or information wherever he could.⁴⁶

The second way that the Imperial War Museum overcame an inability to publicly interact with constituents was by facilitating private admittance, typically for conducting research. That is pre-arranged, overseen access by private persons. As a public institution, such restricted admittance would not have been commonplace. But the conditions created by the Second World War were far from regular, requiring stopgap measures to deliver the museum's

⁴² IWM, MA, EN2/1/ENQ/001, hand-written letter, Males to IWM, 28 March 1940.

⁴³ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ENQ/024, hand-written letter with coloured drawing, Richardson to IWM, 15 June 1943.

⁴⁴ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ENQ/001, hand-written letter, Garrett to IWM, 17 October 1944, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁶ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ENQ/001, typed letter, Bradley to Males, 2 April 1940; IWM, MA, EN2/1/ENQ/024, typed letter, Bradley to Richardson, 24 June 1943; IWM, MA, EN2/1/ENQ/001, typed letter, Bradley to Garrett, 19 October 1944.

required capability. This phenomenon is known as *scaffolding*: where temporary, flexible, generative and constitutive structures metaphorically buttress some initiative or activity (Orlikowski 2006: 461-462). According to Andy Clark (1998: p. 163), such structures manifest as ‘augmentations that allow us to achieve some goal that would otherwise be beyond us’. Given that the purpose of resilience is the continuation of organisational operations, scaffolding can be a way of ensuring this. Where unable to achieve required capability, an organisation can scaffold operations by adding or amending organisational components as required (Child 2005). By creating additional ways of interacting with the public, the Imperial War Museum demonstrated not just pre-existing resilience, but also the ability to generate additional sources.

Instances of private admission to the Imperial War Museum usually resulted from enquiries concerning some research question. The unpublished *War History of the Imperial War Museum* details various occasions, particularly during 1939-1940, where individuals attended for research. The account remarks that there were several classes of enquiry. One kind comprised volunteer service personnel waiting to join their regiment, ship, or squadron, who would try and find out from historical accounts what war might entail. Another kind comprised journalists who sort photographs depicting the previous war to illustrate articles, or information on the First World War work performed by individuals in authority.⁴⁷ One example where the Imperial War Museum admitted a member of the public was the above-mentioned soldier who wanted information about The King’s military decorations. On receiving this request, the Bradley contacted Buckingham Palace for the information. The palace responded by

⁴⁷ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, ‘War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943’, p. 27.

sending him a coloured drawing depicting The King in full uniform.⁴⁸ Bradley produced facsimiles of the decorations, which he invited the soldier to view.⁴⁹

6.6 Non-Public-Facing Civic Services at the Imperial War Museum

6.6.1 Research facilities

The Imperial War Museum also maintained core business continuity by actively delivering various non-public-facing services (Watters 2010: p. 9). This ensured that its required capability of delivering some civic service could be continued (Ferris *et al.* 2019: p. 1094). Such services were more alien to the museum, in philosophy if not practice, than those already discussed. Their existence however can be explained by the fact that the United Kingdom was again experiencing, as during the First World War, total war (Uhle-Wettler 1994: p. 1047; see subsection 5.4.2). Accordingly, society had to adapt to exist in a way that ensured the war effort took primacy. Museums were no exception. As the Standing Commission on Museum and Galleries (1948) reported after the war, many national museum and galleries performed a heterogeneous array of civic services that in peace time would have been inconceivable, but which total war rendered necessary for their continued legitimacy. Indeed, museums big and small were expected to play their part (Pearson 2017).

This situation resonates with Janes's (2009) ideas about museum resilience. He argues that museums must make proactive, positive interventions in society to build up their organisational resilience, itself resonating with the adage that 'if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem' (see Heal 2014). Implicit here is the assumption that museums are only as secure as they are both proactive and, more importantly, seen as needed by society (Jones

⁴⁸ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ENQ/024, typed letter, Bradley to Buckingham Palace, 22 June 1943.

⁴⁹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ENQ/024, typed letter, Miéville to Bradley, 23 June 1943; IWM, MA, EN2/1/ENQ/024, typed letter, Bradley to Miéville, 24 June 1943; IWM, MA, EN2/1/ENQ/024, typed letter, Bradley to Richardson, 24 June 1943; IWM, MA, EN2/1/ENQ/024, typed letter, Bradley to Richardson, 19 July 1943.

2001: p. 2; see subsection 4.2.3). Granted, in making this argument, Janes does not refer to a context of total war, but rather human-induced climate change. Yet the basic premise still applies. During the Second World War, if museums were not actively supporting the war effort, they could be seen as hindering it, and have action taken against them. Museum resilience in this regard therefore also depends on continuing a civic service, whatever the service may be. That it conforms to a museum's typical or commonly accepted paradigm is secondary.

One of the more conventional non-public-facing civic services, which follows neatly on from the previous public-facing example, was by facilitating war research. During the Second World War, many individuals acting for the government visited the Imperial War Museum to undertake war research. Its photographs were of particular interest in this regard. They informed officials on many and varied issues. Subjects that underwent investigation included, but were not limited to, advising on the erection of camouflage for strategic assets; the design of steel helmets for civilian issue; the development of gas protection for buildings, people and animals; and the construction of trenches, shelters and dugouts for people to take refuge in.⁵⁰ Despite its more conventional nature, this work can still be seen as another form of bricolage discussed above (Kendra and Wachtendorf 2003: p. 42). Before the Second World War, the Imperial War Museum had developed into a *de facto* early peace museum (Apsel 2016: pp. 12-16), with the Director-General, Leslie Bradley, complaining about the institution being used to help people prepare for any new conflict (see subsection 5.2.4).⁵¹ But once the United Kingdom formally declared war on Germany, this stance was no longer tenable. Operational requirement meant that the Imperial War Museum needed to temporarily institute new positions and policies, both formal and informal, about the rationale and use of its collection.

⁵⁰ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943', pp. 26-29.

⁵¹ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 21st Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees', p. 1.

Evidence shows that after the war it attempted to return to promoting peace and pacifism through exhibitions (Committee of Public Accounts 1957: p. 17).

A remarkably detailed collection of Home Office papers, located at The National Archives, gives a particularly vivid account in this regard. On 24 November 1939, the Imperial War Museum received a visit by Professor J. D. Bernal and his assistant for government research purposes. Bernal was an Irish physicist. He had adjourned his academic career to take up employment with the Department of Home Security at the Research and Experiments Department (Calder 1999: pp. 165-166). The reason for Bernal's visit was to assess the destructiveness of aerial bombs on ground targets such as buildings. A hand-written report produced after the visit details all the material that he consulted there and their informative value.⁵² Of these, the photographs and London Fire Brigade reports were considered most beneficial, appearing to 'yield useful material for statistical analysis especially in regard to casualties'.⁵³

6.6.2 Loaning objects to organisations and initiatives

A second non-public-facing civic service undertaken by the Imperial War Museum which depended on bricolage (Kendra and Wachtendorf 2003: p. 42) for similarly contradicting its peacetime philosophy discussed above was collaborating with other organisations on war initiatives through loaning out items from the collections. These typically went to be displayed in externally curated exhibitions towards various local and national causes. While some supported educational exhibitions such as the London *Gas in War* and *Fuel Economy* exhibitions of 1941 and 1942 respectively, many supported regional

⁵² TNA, HO 196/4, hand-written report, 13/3/5, 'Air Raid Damage in London, 1914-1918: Records and Photographs in the Imperial War Museum', 27 November 1939.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

and national exhibitions on National Savings, a national war funding scheme (Longmate 2002: p. 382; Singleton 2014: pp. 218-219).⁵⁴

6.6.3 Returning objects to their original functionality

Allowing its collections to be explicitly researched and displayed towards the country's war effort went against the then recent anti-war philosophy held by the Imperial War Museum. But the basic activities were not unusual. Accordingly, from a practical perspective, they could have been easily implemented as part of the museum's ongoing business continuity processes through engaging existing schedules and systems there (Child 2005). Yet the Imperial War Museum also performed activities which a historical review suggests may have been quite alien to it. As such, these activities could be less easily implemented, requiring scaffolding, discussed above, to deliver them (Orlikowski 2006: 461-462).

A third non-public-facing activity undertaken by the Imperial War Museum was its decision to voluntarily return various collection items for use in the war. By June 1940, the British Expeditionary Force had been evacuated from continental Europe following the German military's advance into France and the Low Countries. It left behind much equipment, compromising the army's ability to defend the British Isles. The government therefore instigated an emergency re-equipment programme (Thompson 2009: p. 297), which included accepting *matériel* gifted by the Imperial War Museum: unwanted duplicate items, and items considered culturally insignificant (Charman 2008: p. 103).⁵⁵ This is a good example of required capability (Ferris *et al.* 2019: p. 1094) being extended with the aid of temporary, flexible, generative and constitutive structures (Orlikowski 2006: 461-462). The civic service which the Imperial War Museum found itself needing to perform was evolving outwith the museum's established organisational model. In this example, rather than preserve them, it returned

⁵⁴ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943', pp. 26-29.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

certain collection items for service, risking damage being caused. Nothing like this had been undertaken by the museum before the Second World War era. As such, it required provisional structuration measures to facilitate the outcome.

During August 1940, the Ministry of Supply accepted ten observation telescopes, two theodolites, one alidade and two dial sights from the museum.⁵⁶ The British Army also accepted forty steel helmets, three howitzers and one field gun.⁵⁷ Later, during October 1940, the Ministry of Supply accepted a second alidade.⁵⁸ In other examples following the invasion scare, 14 navel artillery pieces were accepted by the Royal Navy over November 1940-February 1941, an unspecified number of German dial sights by the Ministry of Supply for recycling during November 1941, and surgical supplies and crutches by the nearby St Thomas' Hospital in London during June 1947.⁵⁹ The unpublished wartime account also indicates that the Royal Veterinary College in London accepted veterinary equipment during July 1940.⁶⁰

No scholarly discussion on this kind of *industrial reclamation*, as the practice is termed here, has been discovered in prevailing museum literature.

⁵⁶ IWM, MA, EN2/1/DIS/001, typed letter, unidentifiable individual [titled as Assistant Director of Instrument Production] to Bradley, 15 August 1940, plus overleaf receipt signed by Johnson, 16 August 1940.

⁵⁷ IWM, MA, EN2/1/DIS/001, typed letter, Naley to Bradley, countersigned by Derham, 14 August 1940; IWM, MA, EN2/1/DIS/001, typed letter, Hammond to Bradley, 26 July 1940; IWM, MA, EN2/1/DIS/001, list of weapons resituated with the following hand-written note underneath. 'Taken away 16. 8. 40. See letter from War Office dated 26 July 1940. Ref. 57/M.A./4745.'

⁵⁸ IWM, MA, EN2/1/DIS/001, typed letter, Manualt to Bradley, 30 October 1940.

⁵⁹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/011, see documents contained therein; IWM, MA, EN2/1/DIS/001, typed letter, unidentifiable individual [titled as Assistant Director of Instrument Production] to Bradley, 11 November 1941; IWM, MA, EN2/1/DIS/001, typed letter, Pearson to Bradley, 17 June 1947.

⁶⁰ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943', p. 7.

That could be because such ideas challenge long held assumptions about the irreversibility of the symbolic transition by some item from functional object to museum object (Hein 2000: pp. 54-57). Objects in collections are routinely exchanged between museums. They are also disposed of when they no longer represent the thing they once comprised. But rarely are objects deaccessioned and restored to their pre-accession utility. This act conceivably undermines a museum's rationale of preserving material culture. Granted, certain ethnographic cultural religious items are restituted for use again amongst their indigenous communities. In such instances however, the objects have never actually been stripped of their function by the peoples which originally used and possessed them (Bienkowski 2014). Through breaking with this convention, the Imperial War Museum further evidences the abstract museum and museum sector's reflexiveness to the lived environment. Even the supposedly most sacrosanct institutional values can be temporarily disregarded or adjusted when external pressure caused by societal value shifts mount up against them. In doing so, it further evidences the resilience of the museum concept (Decter 2018: p. 17). Some museum advocates may argue that a museum which carries out industrial reclamation of this nature effectively undermines their primary purpose for existence. Such an argument would have merit if it was applied in a context of peace and the normative societal assumptions that predominate therein. Over 1939-1945, however, the Imperial War Museum was not in a context of peace. Rather, as discussed, it was in a context of total war. This necessitated an extraordinary response from the museum, indeed all individuals, communities, and organisations, which, through regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive institutionalisation (Scott 2014; see section 5.2), frequently transgressed normative assumptions regarding social, political, economic and cultural life.

6.6.4 Use of its building

A fourth and perhaps the simplest way that the Imperial War Museum performed some non-public-facing civic service was by sharing its building with

other organisations. This is yet another good example of an extended required capability (Ferris *et al.* 2019: p. 1094) needing the support of scaffolding to be realised (Orlikowski 2006: 461-462). The most visually striking and locally relevant method occurred through hosting a barrage balloon and its crew of Royal Air Force personnel. Barrage balloons were ground-tethered lighter-than-air gas-filled bags which prevented dive bombing and strafing by enemy aeroplanes (Hillson 1989: pp. 31-32). The museum provided billets for around 20 crewmembers as early as the year 1938 until the year 1944.⁶¹ Another way that the Imperial War Museum supported the local community was by storing emergency feeding equipment for the Ministry of Food.⁶² Initially kept in the Naval Gallery, this material eventually spread over multiple rooms and floors across the building. Throughout the war the museum's staff were constantly needed to help maintain the store. Yet as the Imperial War Museum became increasingly damaged during the war, this equipment in turn became more exposed. By September 1942 therefore, the store was relocated.⁶³

Regionally and nationally relevant war work took place at the Imperial War Museum as well. Of all the organisations utilising this space, the Ministry of Works, depicted in Figure 7 running a lecture at the museum, became the biggest user and beneficiary. Throughout September 1941-August 1943, for example, it maintained a busy vehicle and firefighting equipment repair station.⁶⁴ The premises became congested over this period, with bigger pieces of equipment being sent. Eventually, huge green American Red Cross Clubmobile buses, renowned for their donut making machines, started arriving (Madison

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

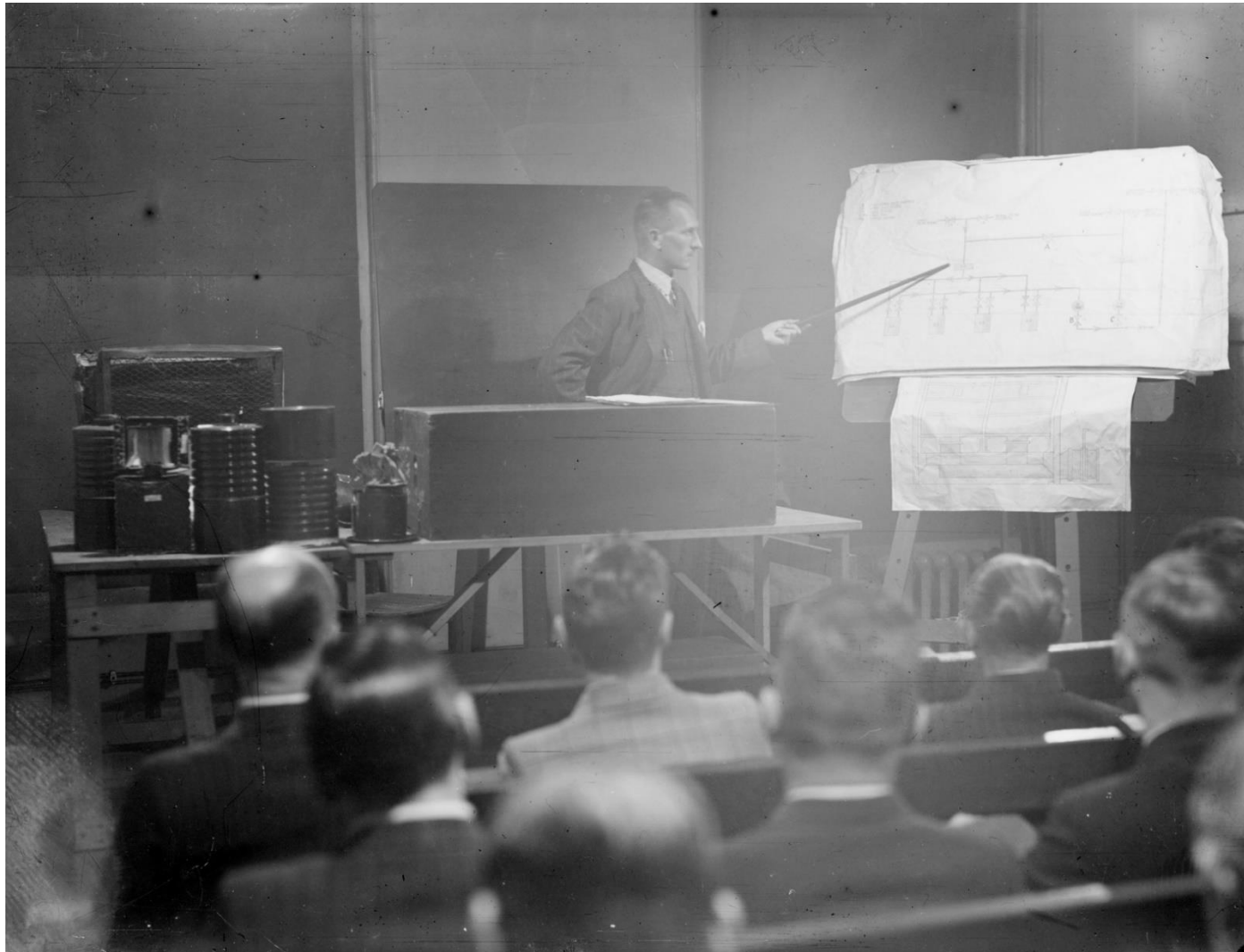


Figure 7 – A lecture on gas filtration in progress at the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War. © IWM (MH 412)

2007: p. 25). This development finally convinced the Ministry of Works that the museum might not be the right place to undertake such repairs. Accordingly, the vehicle section eventually transferred elsewhere.⁶⁵ Another example of war work undertaken by the Ministry of Works at the Imperial War Museum was its research into gas filtration.⁶⁶ Poison gas never featured on the battlefields of the Second World War as it had during the previous world war (Brown 2009). This is not to say however that the government did not anticipate the use of gas by enemy forces. Defensive preparations against gas attacks featured high on its agenda (*ibid.*). The Ministry Works, therefore, established a gas filtration laboratory and lecture space at the Imperial War Museum to research and disseminate methods of filtering atmospheres following gas incursion. This was originally established in the basement during September 1941, but later moved to and expanded on the west wing of B floor during May 1942.⁶⁷ It remained active there until December 1944, being dismantled in February 1946.⁶⁸

6.7 Chapter Conclusion

The onset of the Blitz in September 1940 forced the Imperial War Museum to close its makeshift 'Bore War exhibition'. Through doing so, aside from dealing with written enquiries and private admittance, the museum withdrew from public gaze as was the case with most national museums. The above examples of non-public-facing activities, however, show that it did not withdraw from providing a civic service. In fact, the museum became a focal point for broader civic service activities. While its collection was researched and loaned out for national and local initiatives connected with strengthening and sustaining the country's strategic position, the building facilitated equally important local and

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum: Part II, January 1944 to the Reopening of the Museum on 27th November 1946', p. 13.

national initiatives connected with maintaining people's security and welfare. This contests any notion that the Imperial War Museum inhabited a crisis-conducive situation regarding the continued delivery of some civic service.

Through this example from the case study, the organisational resilience in museums is shown to derive from many different aspects: physical infrastructure, human resources, organisational culture, etcetera. No one attribute suffices alone. The Imperial War Museum maintained a civic service by drawing on resilience in two broad ways. The first was through enabling staff to utilise their skills, knowledge and experience of the museum and work with or augment its structuration as required outside organisational convention. This included facilitating *bricolage*, which is the ability to improvise and apply creativity to address problems, and deploying scaffolding, which in organisational parlance refers to support structures that enable activity which would otherwise be impossible for the museum to accomplish. The second and more important way was by embracing the need to perform roles and activities that fulfilled societal need, even if they diverged from what was usual for the museum during peacetime. As this chapter has discussed, a signature of museum resilience is the skill of perceiving and fulfilling the wants, needs and interest of society, even when those wants, needs and interests are not articulated.

A premise of this thesis argued over subsequent chapters is that if museums, or indeed any organisation, fall into crisis, their operability will be disrupted: disruption being the key signature of crisis which interrupts impacted museum activities. The current chapter on the civic service provision performed by the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War however reveals that not all challenging situations will necessarily be disruptive and thereby crisis-conducive. This is because no interruption to the museum's wartime civic service was evidenced from the primary sources consulted towards producing the chapter. Rather, by drawing on resilience, the Imperial War Museum tracked the changing requirements of society. This resulted in its civic service over the Second World War developing *pro re nata* and continuing unabated.

Accordingly, to frame what transpired in this regard as occupying a crisis-conducive situation would be to misunderstand the concept and impact of crisis.

This chapter demonstrates the idea presented in chapter four (see section 4.5) that crisis management and resilience are two different if not mutually exclusive concepts: successful organisational crisis management draws on organisational resilience. It also establishes what crisis is and, crucially, is not. Crisis has been framed as an unpredictable and unstable situation. Where it impacts a museum or other organisational type, a crisis results in disruption. But as the case of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War shows, crisis does not necessarily represent any and all difficult situations. If a museum is challenged but can continue operating un-disrupted, then the fundamental criteria for being gripped by crisis remains to be met. During the Second World War, the Imperial War Museum was challenged in delivering a civic service through the impact of the conflict. At no point did the challenge prevent it from doing, or require extraordinary measures to do, a civic service. Rather, the museum continued providing a civic service by changing the nature of that service, meeting the evolving wants, needs and interests required by society.

Having fully explored the concept of organisational resilience, this thesis is positioned to commence the first of two explorations of crisis at the Imperial War Museum over the Second World War era. In the following chapter, it considers the crisis-conducive situation catalysed by the various aerial attacks on London. This includes exploring the nature of the crisis, crisis' impact on the Imperial War Museum, and the museum's response to the crisis.

Chapter 7 Safeguarding the Collection, 1933-1950: Surface-Defensive Crisis Management at the Imperial War Museum

7.1 Chapter Introduction

In chapter six I expanded on the concept of resilience (see section 6.3) introduced during chapter four (see section 4.5). As discussed, resilience comprises a quality that enables museums, any organisation, to recover from adversity. Contributory factors include robust physical infrastructure, intangible support mechanisms, and multi-skilled, informed, and dynamic staff. It is a prerequisite for museums managing crisis-conducive situations, although not all situations requiring recourse to resilience are necessarily crisis-conducive.

Building on the issues and ideas covered in the previous chapter, this thesis now narrows its scope of exploration. Whereas chapter six considered museum resilience and demonstrated how the Imperial War Museum drew on resilience when conceiving and maintaining a civic service during the Second World War, the study over the next four chapters explores various ways which the institution was impacted by different crises, and how it responded. During this chapter, I argue that museums are susceptible to ruptures in the social system. Such situations can bring about unpredictable, unstable, and potentially dangerous disruption. To be overcome, museums must mount a defensive response against them. This corresponds with the classical reading of crisis set out in chapter four (see subsection 4.3.1) where an object's continuance is precariously balanced between positive and negative states (Koselleck 2006: p. 172). In doing so, the chapter considers the impact that the aerial attacks against London had on the Imperial War Museum (see Gardener 2010; Mortimer 2010). By exploring the work to protect its collection, I argue that the attacks comprised a crisis-conducive situation which needed rebutting, and exemplify an approach for dealing with it. In undertaking the above, this chapter helps address aim three, objective two; aim four, objectives two and three; aim five, objectives two and three; and aim six, objectives two and three of this study.

Multiple attacks on London were ordered by the German High Command over the Second World War (Overy 2014). The Imperial War Museum suffered greatly from this through bombing raids and strikes from V-1 flying bombs, or ‘Doodlebugs’, and V-2 rockets (Ward 2015: pp. 112-113). Sources portray a torrid situation at the museum (Blaikley 1941b). The first post-war report by the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries (1948: p. 17) commented on the ‘exceptional’ nature of the physical toll against the museum. Figure 8 depicts the London County Council bomb damage map for the area around the museum. It not only shows the concentration of the bombing, but also the grade of damage. The darker the colouring, the greater the devastation. Circles represent strikes by V-weapons: big circles for V-1s, small circles for V-2s.

To understand the crisis-conducive situation that these attacks caused the Imperial War Museum and explore the museum’s response, the chapter deploys two crisis concepts. One is the *surface-defensive crisis*, a novel crisis type which I have theorised towards this research that helps convey the nature of the above crisis-conducive situation experienced by the Imperial War Museum. The type derives from tangible phenomena, producing effects which need rebutting by an impacted museum if it is to survive. The other concept is Christine M. Pearson and Ian I. Mitroff’s (1993) general five-stage framework for crisis management, formerly introduced during chapter four (see section 4.4). This framework sets out five different stages in the crisis management cycle, starting with the search for crisis signals, and ending with what can be usefully learnt from the experience. It has been deployed here to help structure the narrative and analysis of the aerial attacks and their impact on the Imperial War Museum.

This chapter explores the above over three substantive sections. The first section (7.2) contextualises the surface-defensive crisis. It sets out the premise of the crisis type, and what the type signifies. After a brief discussion on the way in which crisis management has been critiqued herein (7.3), the second substantive section (7.4) considers the response by the Imperial War Museum to the aerial attacks informed by the five-stage framework for crisis management.



Figure 8 – A London County Council Bomb Damage Map from the Second World War showing the cumulative damage sustained by areas surrounding the Imperial War Museum. The museum is in the lower middle section. © London Metropolitan Archives (LCC/AR/TP/P/038-043)

It explores the work of the institution in line with each stage informed by the issues and ideas. And the third substantive section (7.5) discusses how the aerial attacks are an example of surface-defensive crisis and management thereof. It achieves this by synthesising the concept with findings from the case study.

7.2 Surface-Defensive Crisis

The surface-defensive crisis is a crisis type predicated on two descriptors. The first, *surface*, illustrates the surface-defensive crisis' practical and critical significance. It implies the nature of the situation of an impacted museum and conveys the limited insight that the situation reveals about the museum's circumstances. The second descriptor, *defensive*, illustrates the effect of the surface-defensive crisis on an impacted museum, and the aims of the preventive or mitigating measures which should be deployed against the situation. It also signifies the sources of danger faced. These sources could comprise anything tangible such as incidents from nature, accidents, or intentional acts (Devlin 2007: p. 17), and so could comprise both black swan and dragon king events (Taleb 2007; Sornette 2009) discussed in chapter four (see subsection 4.3.3).

A surface-defensive crisis situation impacts an impacted museum very little beyond their materiality. This means that its association to wider discourses about museums is limited, if not non-existent. Put another way, the surface-defensive crisis does not arise from a misalignment between some impacted museum and the museum's social system. Accordingly, it does not reveal anything about the circumstances surrounding the museum and wider society, such as social, cultural, or economic shifts that denote broader societal trends. The upshot of this, therefore, is that the significance overarching a surface-defensive crisis is limited to the impacted museum's daily operations. Yet its superficiality does not imply that surface-defensive crises are unimportant or insignificant. Neither does this imply their inappropriateness for use as a framing concept. After all, the surface-defensive crisis is the reason why museums aligned with the social system can experience difficulty and fail.

The purpose of surface-defensive crisis management is to maintain the *status quo*. This can be achieved by averting the crisis through resolving some problem before it strikes, or by mitigating the crisis' effects and restoring stability. As demonstrated by Figure 9, surface-defensive crisis management is, therefore, indicative of resistance: a deflection by the crisis object against the crisis conditions (Milstein 2015: p. 145). This renders it analogous to *disaster*, which Quarantelli (2000: p. 682) defines as 'relatively sudden occasions when, because of perceived threats, the routines of collective social units are seriously disrupted and when unplanned courses of action have to be undertaken to cope with the crisis' (see also Perry 2018: p. 14). Consequently, the surface-defensive crisis comprises a type that draws on the concept's classical reading mentioned above. Moreover, it aligns with the recovery conceptualisation of resilience set out in chapter six (see section 6.3), where the focus is on an ability to withstand or persevere through turbulence (Shaw and Maythorne 2011: p. 46).

7.3 Critiquing Crisis Management

Before next examining the response of the Imperial War Museum to the crisis conducive-situation caused by the aerial attacks, this section briefly sets out how crisis management has been critiqued herein. Scholarship on crisis management can engage with a wide range of issues and ideas. Subjects which consider crisis management range as far as engineering to psychology (Shiralito, Azadiana and Saki 2016; St.Pierre, Hofinger and Simon 2016). Until recently, no single work offered an extensive, holistic framework considering both practical issues and their theoretical contexts. Of the general and practical guides and handbooks that existed on crisis management, the setting was predominantly practical (for example, Bernstein 2011; Saleh 2016; Crandall, Parnell and Spillan 2021). With the publication of *The Crisis Management Cycle* by Christer Pursiainen (2018) though, the many entwined practical and theoretical considerations which crisis management entails are exposed, immeasurably benefiting this study.

Yet, despite Pursiainen's welcome intervention, some sense of the

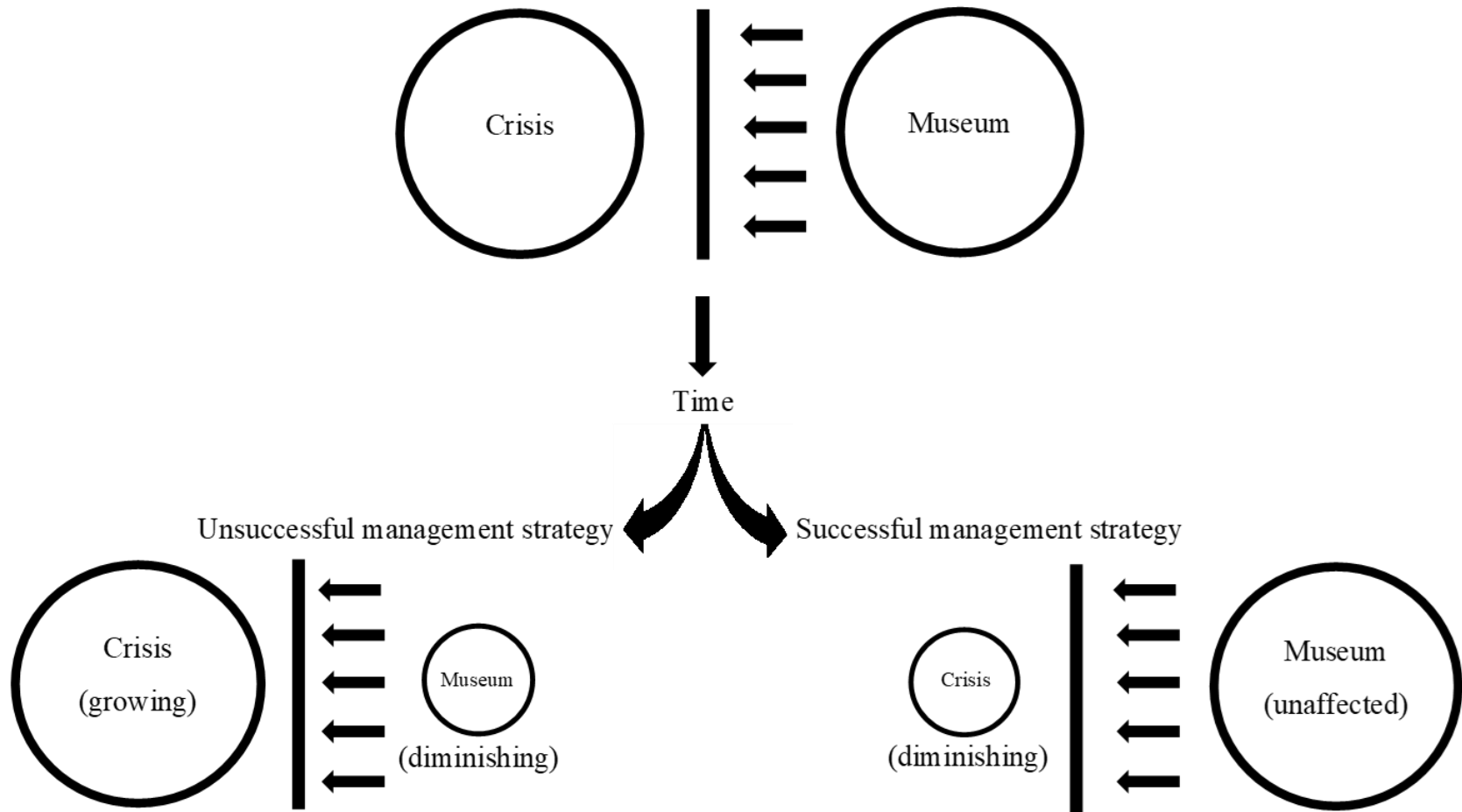


Figure 9 – A diagram illustrating the two possible outcomes of surface-defensive crisis on a museum.

importance of the individual considerations – the issues and ideas comprising it – still appears to remain elusive from the prevailing literature. Consequently, a significant challenge faced while producing the thesis revolved around determining which practical and theoretical considerations should be included and omitted. The study, given its specific historical and critical focus, had neither the length nor purview to address all the heterogeneous considerations raised by Pursiainen. With no obvious framework therefore, the critique of crisis management herein was driven by the case study. That means the issues and ideas addressed in the current and following chapters are raised because the case study demands them: a pragmatic approach to limiting the consideration.

7.4 Mitigating the Crisis of Physical Destruction

7.4.1 *Detecting the crisis*

Surface-defensive crisis management begins with the discovery of threats before danger becomes reality. Signal detection, therefore, the first stage in Pearson and Mitroff's (1993: pp. 52-53) general five-stage framework illustrated in Figure 10, is the period wherein a crisis 'object' (Milstein 2015: pp. 249-250) such as a museum or other organisational type discovers some impending crisis situation. It involves the museum undertaking risk assessments (Pursiainen 2018: pp. 9-16) to distinguish between crisis signals and everyday noise (Al Luhaidan and Alrazeeni 2019). This task is not easily accomplished however when conflicting signals are received. Indeed, the issue has had notable attention in economics (Babecký *et al.* 2012: pp. 6-7), where economists have developed tools for analysing crisis potentials with the aim of minimising missed crises and false alarms (see, for example, Kaminsky, Lizondo and Reinhart 1998).

In practice, signal detection comprises two tasks. The first involves analysing all the incoming information – an essential resource for coordinating and improving any crisis management (Vukajlović *et al.* 2019), which must be systematically collected, processed and appropriately disseminated (Lagadec 1993: pp. 224-226) – to distinguish between red flags and background noise

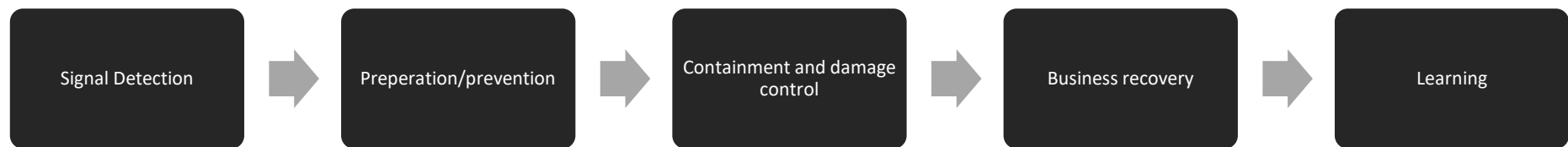


Figure 10 – The five stages of Pearson and Mitroff's (1993) general framework for crisis management.

(Paraskevas 2013a: pp. 628-629): a process of risk identification and analysis (Pursiainen 2018: pp. 16-23). The term *red flag* is a metaphor for warning sign (Oxford 2009). In crisis discourse, a red flag could be any phenomenon, such as unusual data returns, which signifies something internally or externally amiss with the museum (Coombs 2019: pp. 33-42). For surface-defensive crises, red flags could comprise raised humidity levels throughout exhibition spaces or object stores, or weather alerts: basically, any indicator of empirical, rather than metaphysical, phenomena. The second task involves analysing potential red flags specifically to try and determine their credibility (Paraskevas 2013a: p. 629): evaluating their risk potential (Pursiainen 2018: pp. 23-26).

It is through this two-fold process in which crisis contexts are formulated (Milstein 2015: pp. 147-149), and out of which crisis ‘communities’ are born (*ibid.*: pp. 151-152). As discussed in chapter four (see subsection 4.3.2), crises arise from being conceived by somebody, and then verified by others, which provides the crisis with legitimacy. This newly established community of the crisis conscious then licences itself to delineate the crisis. But not all red flags will be genuine despite contrary perceptions, meaning not all crisis responses will be necessary. Certain red flags may turn out to be errors, benign or of unknown origin (Coombs 2019: pp. 43-44). If a wrong judgment is made, the outcome could cause harm to a museum (Ansell and Bartenberger 2019: p. 6).

It was signal detection at the governmental level that catalysed preparations by the Imperial War Museum for the crisis-conducive conditions of the Second World War. In other words, the British government detected the threats, which the museum legitimised, as discussed above. One red flag was Germany’s withdrawal from the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference during November 1933 (Gibbs 1976: pp. 84-85). Another was the advancement in aerial warfare, exacerbating the potential ramifications of the former to the United Kingdom (O’Brien 1955: pp. 12-13). Aircraft now had significant capabilities, the Spanish Civil War fully demonstrating their potential (Romero Salvadó 2013: pp. 31-32). Compounded by the belief that ‘the bomber

will always get through’, so declared Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin to the House of Commons on 10 November 1932 (HC Deb. (1932-1933) 270, col. 632), fears about an overwhelming ‘knockout blow’ against London in the event of war therefore plagued policy makers throughout Whitehall during the 1930s as countries rearmed and war on the continent loomed (Holman 2016: p. 56).

Through its superordinate critique of these red flags, the government sought the Imperial War Museum, along with other national institutions, to begin preparing for war over 1933-1934. Specifically, the Office of Works had concern for the London national museums and their collections should the capital experience an aerial bombardment (Pearson 2017: p. 63). Consequently, the First Commissioner of Works convened a conference on the Safe Custody of National Art Treasures in the event of War, to which representatives from the London national museums were summoned. Representing the Imperial War Museum was Leslie Bradley, then its newly promoted Curator and Secretary. At this conference the delegates discussed their institution’s requirements to deal with this situation and develop their resilience (Giustiniano *et al.* 2018: p. 14).⁶⁹

7.4.2 Preparing for the crisis

Once any potential crisis has been detected and legitimised, the next stage of crisis management, as set out in Pearson and Mitroff’s (1993: p. 53) general five-stage framework, is to prevent or prepare for a crisis. This relies on two tasks being accomplished before any such work can be contemplated. The first involves identifying the kind of crisis which is being confronted (Paraskevas 2013a: pp. 629-630). A museum will need to determine whether the situation it faces possesses defensive or revolutionary properties (Milstein 2015: p. 145) and can be prevented or not. This is because the nature of the crisis determines the museum’s response. The second task involves formulating that response – or the

⁶⁹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/CON/004, typed notes, ‘Safe Custody of National Art Treasures in the Event of War’, December 1933; IWM, MA, EN2/1/CON/004, typed meeting minutes, ‘Air Raid Precautions: Safe Custody of National Art Treasures’, 17 January 1934.

‘satisfactory resolution’ (Milstein 2015: pp. 150-151) – by devising an appropriate strategy to deal with it (Paraskevas 2013a: p. 630). A strategy informs all subsequent activities towards preventing potential crisis (Pursiainen 2018: pp. 39-68) or weathering the impact where prevention is impossible (*ibid.*: pp. 69-95). Surface-defensive crisis strategies could be either preventative or mitigating. Which one they embody largely depends on the origins of the crisis – the thing that caused it – and the stage at which the crisis is detected.

The records from the 1933 and 1934 conferences on the Safe Custody of National Art Treasures indicate the delegates perceived a defensive crisis-conducive situation confronting the London national museums, even if they did not acknowledge that reading at the time. This is because their conversations articulate a strategy concerned with preserving the materiality of the institutions. If necessary and feasible, the primary action was to evacuate the collections from their respective museums and secure them in safely located refuges.⁷⁰

The Imperial War Museum responded to this crisis-conducive situation with preparations constitutive of the agreed strategy. It commenced this by instigating *capability-building* measures: creating the necessary knowledge and skills for performing a task (Pursiainen 2018: pp. 85-88). In crisis planning, Stephanie Duchek (2020: pp. 226) describes such work as developing ‘[intangible] resources that are necessary in times of crisis (e.g., suitable recovery plans, effective relationships, and mutual understanding)’. Two examples of where the museum achieved this was through identifying collection items requiring evacuation and securing country houses for their refuge.

After a brief interregnum over the winter spanning 1934-1935 during which it transferred from South Kensington to Southwark (Cooke and Jenkins 2001), the Imperial War Museum continued crisis management preparations with the added focus on *capacity-building*: establishing the necessary resources for performing a task (Pursiainen 2018: pp. 79-81). In particular, the museum

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

enhanced its new building's protective qualities and structural integrity.⁷¹ This is because there was agreement at the museum and the Office of Works that an orderly evacuation might not be possible.⁷² Indeed, the unpublished war history reflects on the fear during early preparations that the collection might have needed evacuating 'at very short notice, at great speed – possibly at night – and under fire'.⁷³ Moreover, many of its collection items could not be removed from the premises (Committee of Public Accounts 1957: p. 17). One project which the Office of Works undertook therefore involved building a refuge in the museum's basement where collection items could be stored as a last resort.⁷⁴

It is important to emphasise that not all crises are preventable. While some derive from circumstances which develop hidden from view, others, as with the example discussed here confronting the Imperial War Museum, derive from circumstances which realistically develop out of reach or beyond human control, whether visible or not (Paraskevas 2013a: p. 29). Given that a great many surface-defensive crises arise from circumstances unconnected to societal value shifts, clearly many such crises cannot be prevented. The benchmark for successful crisis management therefore, including surface-defensive crisis management, should not necessarily be predicated on whether crisis was prevented, but whether the crisis was survived – an equally successful outcome (*ibid.*). With the Imperial War Museum, there existed little if any realistic chance of it preventing war on the European continent, even if its 1939 decision to reconstitute a chair owned by Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg back to the

⁷¹ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943', p. 4.

⁷² IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/002/16, typed letter, de Normann to Curator and Secretary, 24 September 1937.

⁷³ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943', p. 1

⁷⁴ IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/002/16, typed letter, de Normann to Curator and Secretary, 24 September 1937.

German state comprised an attempt to appease Nazi ambitions.⁷⁵ Consequently, the analysis now tracks the second course in crisis management, exploring the museum's work at limiting and containing this crisis-conducive situation.

7.4.3 Mitigating the crisis

Where a legitimised crisis cannot be offset, sooner or later the crisis will strike. When this occurs, crisis management, if conforming with Pearson and Mitroff's (1993: p. 53) general five-stage framework, enters its third stage: mitigating the effects. According to William Crandall, John A. Parnell and John E. Spillan (2021: p. 204), this is the point where previous crisis planning gets brought to bear against the crisis, with those museums possessing developed and considered plans faring better than those which do not. A critique of Pearson and Mitroff's (1993) framework points towards mitigation comprising two fundamental tasks (Paraskevas 2013a: p. 630). The first, crisis containment, involves preventing the crisis situation from spreading, thereby curtailing its damage capability (Franks 2013). This work is particularly important to complex museum organisations gripped by surface-defensive crisis. As Niall Ferguson's (2021) history of catastrophe shows, the more intricate a system, the greater the risk of collapse through the progressive disruption of interrelated and connected nodes. The second task, damage limitation, parallels crisis containment, but contrasts by revolving around limiting the crisis' impact wherever the crisis spreads (Hopkin 2017: p. 156). Both these are undertaken in a context of continual crisis assessment, which involves analysing the crisis situation with the view to amending the existing crisis management plan as required (Coombs 2019: pp. 52-53). Where some crisis management plan does not exist, crisis assessment should take place with the view to determining what actions and resources must be deployed against the threat (Wilson 2004).

⁷⁵ IWM, MA, EN1/1/TRO/004/1, see documentation therein.

Crisis-conducive mitigation measures had been underway for over a week at the Imperial War Museum by the declaration of war on 3 September 1939. This was for precautionary purposes. As the international situation intensified, on 23 August 1939, the Home Secretary ordered that the London national museums should execute their respective plans to preclude the possibility of evacuations being caught up in any opening engagements (Pearson 2017: p. 64). Such moves embody *risk avoidance* strategies. Alexandros Paraskevas (2013b: p. 842) explains that these comprise action towards ensuring that ‘risks with high likelihood and/or potentially devastating impact [are avoided]’. At the Imperial War Museum, this involved gathering preselected collection material – certain artworks and all its photographic albums⁷⁶ – by three different exits.⁷⁷ The artwork was ordered in accordance with their priority for evacuation.⁷⁸ On 24 August, two lorries, supplied by the Office of Works, conveyed material to two prearranged country houses. A further three such loads went on 25 August.⁷⁹ Each lorry was accompanied by four Museum Attendants armed with First World War trench clubs to defend the cargo from mob attack. This threat had been thought a real possibility since the earliest preparations, particularly in the event of a huge aerial attack on London as discussed above.

By 1939 three country houses owned by Trustees of the Imperial War Museum had been selected as refuges for evacuated collection items. These were Penn House near Amersham in Buckinghamshire, owned by Francis

⁷⁶ IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/002/3, typed notes, untitled document headed with Class I on page 1, Class II on page 4, Class III on page 5, and Class IV on page 6; IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/002/3, typed notes, ‘Photographic Albums’.

⁷⁷ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, ‘War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943’, p. 4.

⁷⁸ IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/002/3, typed notes, six-page untitled and undated document headed with ‘Class I’ on page 1, ‘Class II’ on page 4, ‘Class III’ on page 5, and ‘Class IV’ on page 6.

⁷⁹ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, ‘War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943’, pp. 4-5.

Curzon, 5th Earl Howe; Ramster Hall near Chiddingfold in Surrey, owned by Florence Priscilla Norman, Lady Norman; and Colworth House near Sharnbrook in Bedfordshire, owned by Henry Ludwig Mond, 2nd Baron Melchett.⁸⁰ Country houses as refuges for evacuated collections had both positive and negative aspects. On one hand, they were located outside urban and military areas, and diffusely situated. This meant that, alongside reducing the risk of being damaged by enemy activity through facilitating proactive *risk mitigation* (Paraskevas 2013b: pp. 842-843), country houses also prevented damage by communicable secondary effects such as flood or conflagration from spreading beyond impact zones (Franks 2013: p. 227). They therefore lessened the overall threat to the evacuated material from aerial attack. On the other hand, however, the country houses were, amongst other challenges, old, made from flammable materials and often occupied by their owners or others in some capacity, rendering them a fire risk (McCamley 2003: pp. 22-28; Whittaker 2010: pp. 26-28; Robinson 2014: pp. 1-2).⁸¹ Accordingly, the country houses used by the Imperial War Museum underwent inspections by officials from the Office and later Ministry of Works, who checked the items and monitored their conditions. The resulting information enabled staff at the museum to assess the situation at the refuges, evaluate the merits and demerits of the prevailing strategy, and see whether any aspect required amending (Crandall, Parnell and Spillan 2021: pp. 216-217).⁸²

Even if country houses had problems, they would eventually comprise more conducive environments to safeguarding the collection of the Imperial War Museum than its own building in Southwark. Just over one year after the evacuation, on 7 September 1940, the Luftwaffe's first bombing campaign – the 'Blitz' – struck the capital (Overy 2014: p. 86). Throughout the next eight

⁸⁰ IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/002/3, typed and handwritten notes, one-page untitled document detailing the name and location of the refuges and contact details of their owners.

⁸¹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/111, typed notes, 'Storage Accommodation Required by the Imperial War Museum in the Event of War', 27 July 1948.

⁸² TNA, WORK 17/180, see documentation therein.

months, the museum found itself at constant risk from air raids, especially at night.⁸³ This was followed by other campaigns, resulting in forty-one incidents including a handful of direct hits.⁸⁴ Located near central London, and with multiple potential targets nearby, the Imperial War Museum was far more vulnerable to falling bombs than other London national museums, such as those from South Kensington (Ward 2015). This meant that despite implementing damage limitation measures at the museum through establishing fire watches and air raid precautions discussed below (Hopkin 2017: p. 156), some collection items still sustained irrevocable damage, the impact of which were not just felt by the collection, but also the museum as a legitimate institution. Together, the effects forced the museum to review its existing containment strategy.

The catalyst for this review was a direct hit against the Naval Gallery on 31 January 1941 by a high explosive bomb.⁸⁵ Besides the destruction of expensive ship models and other material, the Imperial War Museum lost the world's last Short Seaplane. Flown at the Battle of Jutland during the First World War, the museum framed this specimen as the first aeroplane to participate in a naval engagement (Blaikley 1941a: p. 8). Figure 11, when contrasted with Figure 5 in chapter five, shows the devastation the bombing wrought. The Director-General, Bradley, took this incident badly, and asked that the Board of Trustees consider his position.⁸⁶ The Board retained confidence in him, with Trustee Sir John Forsdyke, Director of the British Museum, writing that 'we [as Trustees] are

⁸³ IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/002/2, see documents contained therein. Note that this does not provide full details of the effects on the Imperial War Museum, but it does convey a sense of the experience of the museum.

⁸⁴ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum: Part II, January 1944 to the Reopening of the Museum on 27th November 1946', p. 4. Note that the source of this information states 10 September 1941-14 February 1945, but this appears to be a typographical error, as the first incident involving the Imperial War Museum has been documented as having taken place on 10 September 1940.

⁸⁵ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/004/7, typed letter, Bradley to Cubitt, 1 February 1941.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

responsible for our policy and decisions in these respects'.⁸⁷ Other perspectives on its limited evacuation however were far less understanding.

Not long after the strike, Bradley received a sternly worded note from the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Harry Crookshank. Scrawled below an official document detailing the museum's financial estimates for the following year, he wrote: 'I am rather shocked to find that this museum has evacuated practically nothing. Is it too late for them to try and do a bit of dispersing for some of their things are of considerable historical interest?'⁸⁸ Crookshank's criticism of the museum's strategy demonstrates the influence poor crisis management can have on a museum's image and, in turn, its legitimacy amongst stakeholders (Massey 2001). Legitimacy is granted to organisations which are perceived by society to behave correctly, however correct behaviour is defined. The work comprising crisis containment and limitation therefore involves more than just the work of managing the empirical effects of crisis. It also involves the work of communicating the effectiveness and appropriateness of the strategy to stakeholders and the public (Duran 2014). This has significant implications for organisational recovery from crisis. If the handling of crisis is perceived publicly to be poor, it could catalyse a further additionally damaging crisis of legitimacy as stakeholders and society at large reject impacted museums, with potentially crippling ramifications for them (Frandsen and Johansen 2020).

Through increasing danger and criticism, the Imperial War Museum was forced to change the plan and evacuate more material, with the Office of Works recommending a total evacuation.⁸⁹ As previously mentioned, however, this was

⁸⁷ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/004/7, typed letter, Forsdyke to Bradley, 5 February 1941

⁸⁸ IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/001/3, typed meeting minutes, Standing Committee, 20 February 1941, p. 1.

⁸⁹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/002/2, typed notes, three-page undated document headed with 'Imperial War Museum' on page 1 and subheaded with 'Air Raid Incidents' on pages 1-2, 'Evacuations', 'Loans' and 'Disposals' on page 2 and 'Miscellaneous Happenings' on page 3, p. 2.



Figure 11 – The Naval Gallery of the Imperial War Museum following a direct hit in 1941. © IWM (MH 127)

physically impossible because of the size and weight of some of the items from its collection. In practice, therefore, the museum maintained a partial evacuation, with those collection items which could be removed being evacuated as and when necessary. Some moveable items became accepted by more safely located institutions into their temporary care. Others were sent on tours around the country. And some had space purchased for them in commercially managed country houses: an arrangement brokered by the Office of Works.⁹⁰ One of the last elements from the collection to be evacuated was the library. Since war preparations began, it had been intended that library holdings would remain in London for as long as possible. This was because they had proven during the interwar years to be useful resources for undertaking preparatory war research.⁹¹ Eventually, however, that policy became unsustainable. Consequently, during June 1941, the library was evacuated to Barnstaple.⁹² Following this, virtually everything which could be removed from the museum's building, had been.

7.4.4 Recovering from the crisis

Crises always come to an end, eventually, in one outcome or another. For the organisation that has survived, recovery comes next. This is stage four in Pearson and Mitroff's (1993: p. 53) general five-stage framework. Recovery can be broken down into two parts. The first comprises a post-crisis assessment that evaluates the needs of the organisation to become functional again. This includes determining the schedules and systems (Child 2005: p. 12) required for restoring operations (Paraskevas 2013a: pp. 630-631). The second part comprises the execution of a programme of activities which, depending on the

⁹⁰ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943', pp. 6-7.

⁹¹ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, 'Imperial War Museum: 21st Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees', p. 1.

⁹² IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943', p. 7.

findings from the post-crisis assessment, begins restoring the museum's operationality and ability to pursue its aims and objectives (*ibid.*: p. 631).

Recovery supports broader efforts at ensuring business continuity discussed in chapter six (see subsection 6.5.1; Watters 2010: p. 9). As with crisis containment and damage limitation, successful recovery depends on the crisis preparations in place: their extensiveness and appropriateness (Paraskevas 2013a: p. 631). Swift recovery is essential for museums emerging from surface-defensive crisis. Periods of inactivity brought about by empirical disruption can cause losses in income, market share – an idea understood in the museum sector (see Johnson and Thomas 1994; Janes 2007; Scott 2007) – public recognition and/or corporate image (Saleh 2016: p. 258). Museums must think and operate creatively and entrepreneurially during this stage, performing bricolage (Kendra and Wachtendorf 2003: p. 42) and, where necessary, deploying scaffolding (Orlikowski 2006: pp. 461-462) as introduced during chapter six (see subsections 6.5.1 and 6.5.2). Accordingly, surface-defensive crisis recovery work can be likened to a start-up business: often poorly resourced, and carried out strategically, with small margin for error (see Miller-Cole and Cole 2017).

An assessment at the Imperial War Museum by the Director-General, Bradley, identified three basic needs to ensure business continuity (Watters 2010: p. 9). The first involved making its building safe and presentable. The second need involved receiving and processing the three-dimensional collection items which had been earmarked by the museum for the emerging Second World War collection, discussed in subsequent chapters. And the third involved reclaiming the evacuated items: a task which lasted into 1950 with certain paintings yet to be returned.⁹³ The most important of these comprised the first, as neither other could be achieved without a functional building.

⁹³ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/103, typed notes, 'Notes on Immediate Post-War Policy and Storage Requirements. For Discussion at the Meeting on May 1st'. IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/009/2, typed meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 27 March 1950, p. 3.

This matter first received consideration during September 1944 during a meeting convened on the subject by the Ministry of Works with London national museum directors. It resulted in each museum evaluating the damage they had sustained over the war and determining what work would be needed before fully reopening.⁹⁴ By VE-Day, on 8 May 1945, the Imperial War Museum was quite dilapidated. Substantial renovation and cleaning work needed doing before the public could be readmitted. A staggered approach to its recovery therefore was deemed necessary, prioritising the restoration over three stages. The first involved cleaning and renovating those spaces ‘essential for an initial reopening’.⁹⁵ The second stage involved spaces required ‘as soon as possible after the initial reopening’.⁹⁶ And the third stage involved spaces that could be reserved ‘until complete reopening was possible’.⁹⁷ At the same time the condition of each space was analysed and grouped in three categories which classified the necessary work before their use by visitors. The first comprised spaces requiring ‘not much more than cleaning down and/or slight renovation’.⁹⁸ The second category comprised spaces requiring ‘superficial internal repairs’.⁹⁹ And the third category comprised spaces requiring ‘light structural repair to the fabric including roofs and/or removal of non-built-in protective treatment’.¹⁰⁰

From this work, it was concluded that business continuity (Watters 2010: p. 9) could be achieved at the Imperial War Museum by reinstating the entrance hall, reference rooms on Floors B and C in the north block, and three main

⁹⁴ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/103, typed meeting minutes, ‘Museums and Galleries’, 27 September 1944.

⁹⁵ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/103, typed information matrix, ‘Art and Science Building Post-War Reopening’.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

galleries on Floor A. The entrance hall was assessed as requiring only minimal work: cleaning down and/or slight renovation. The reference rooms and galleries, by contrast, required superficial and light structural repairs, which did not necessarily prohibit their immediate use.¹⁰¹ Yet at the meeting of 27 September 1944, the Ministry of Works warned that owing to limited resources, plus the many homes and infrastructure requiring repairs as priority, any work on museum renovation must, in the immediate term, be superficial.¹⁰² This was little more than cleaning and painting, quashing any prospect of the museum's prompt and permanent reopening once the war had finally ended.

The inability to renovate put the Imperial War Museum in limbo when VE-Day arrived. Decreasingly needed to facilitate war work, but unable to resume any public programme until its unoccupied spaces could be restored, the museum looked ahead to an uncertain period of reduced activity and with diminishing capital (Saleh 2016: p. 258). But in a serendipitous coincidence, the prospect disappeared over June-July 1945 when two chance developments occurred. One was the withdrawal in July of the Enemy Weapons Exhibition from Galleries A and B.¹⁰³ This externally curated exhibition had resided there since 1944 to familiarise Allied service personnel with the enemy weaponry which they might encounter when serving overseas, its departure freeing up less dilapidated space for other uses.¹⁰⁴ Another was the opportunity to accommodate a private exhibition by the governmental Petroleum Warfare Department on its wartime work, which had been looking for venues wherein the exhibition could be publicly displayed.¹⁰⁵ Bradley had been aware of this exhibition and its

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/103, typed meeting minutes, 'Museums and Galleries', 27 September 1944.

¹⁰³ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/058/1, typed letter, anon. to Robson, 12 July 1945.

¹⁰⁴ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, War History of the Imperial War Museum: Part II, January 1944 to the Reopening of the Museum on 27th November 1946', pp. 4-7.

¹⁰⁵ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/058/1, typed letter, anon. to Robson, 12 July 1945.

circumstances since June 1945.¹⁰⁶ After receiving the departure date for the Enemy Weapons Exhibition, he approached the Petroleum Warfare Department about hosting its exhibition at the museum.¹⁰⁷ The idea was warmly received by the curators, and so both parties set about collaborating on its transfer.¹⁰⁸

This was a mutually beneficial arrangement, but particularly beneficial for the Imperial War Museum. The exhibition presented a low-cost opportunity to start restoring operations by recommencing a public programme following nearly five years inactivity since the ‘Bore War’ exhibition discussed in chapter six (see subsection 6.5.1; Paraskevas 2013a: p. 631), the uptake demonstrating an entrepreneurial spirit required by museums recovering from crisis: thinking beyond conventional wisdom, quick reactivity, agility and collaboratives (Sullivan n.y.: paras 10-14). Moreover, the museum could gauge its post-war viability through assessing public interest in war, an important development goal of the institution today (Lees, quoted in Moss 2014: para. 2). Indeed, the priorities towards developing the visitor base could finally be ascertained. This is essential in maintaining museum sustainability (Reeve 2006). The exhibition’s benefit to support the Imperial War Museum was not lost on one member of the Petroleum Warfare Department, who, when congratulating Bradley over its transfer, stated his hope that ‘it will put your Museum more on the map’.¹⁰⁹

The Petroleum Warfare Exhibition opened on 4 October 1945 and remained there until 18 January 1946.¹¹⁰ 20,856 people attended during its time:

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/058/1, typed letter, Robson to Bradley, 21 July 1945; IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/058/1, typed notes, ‘P.W.D. Exhibition at the Imperial War Museum’, 25 July 1945; IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/058/1, typed meeting minutes, ‘Petroleum Warfare Department Exhibition, Imperial War Museum’, 11 September 1945.

¹⁰⁹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/058/1, typed letter, Robson to Bradley, 5 October 1945.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*; IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/058/1, sample invitation to exhibition opening; IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/005/2, typed draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 4 March 1945.

an impressive number, considering its only advertisement was through press reviews.¹¹¹ This visitor figure, plus critical acclaim, led the unpublished war history to treat the exhibition in hindsight as a success. On 4 March 1946, the museum started preparing for its own permanent if token reopening.¹¹²

7.4.5 Learning from the crisis

Once a museum has recovered from crisis, they can reflect on their performance. But learning, the fifth stage in Pearson and Mitroff's (1993) general five-stage framework, is an often neglected activity (Cannon and Edmondson 2001), but overlooked at a museum's peril (Crandall, Parnell and Spillan 2021: p. 265). It is also only an emerging area of academic interest (Pursiainen 2018: p. 146). If undertaken after a crisis, particularly a surface-defensive crisis owing to the sudden ferocity with which they can arise, learning may help prepare museums for the same or similar crises in the future (Carmeli and Schaubroeck 2008).

As discussed over this chapter and demonstrated by the actions of the Imperial War Museum, when crises occur, an organisation deals with them through following crisis management plans formulated in advance or hurriedly devised after their commencement. The organisation responds by taking action to offset or suppress the effects and restore disrupted operations. This process arises through what Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schön (1978: p. 18) call *single-loop learning*, where 'members of the organization respond to changes in the internal and external environments of the organization by detecting errors which they then correct so as to maintain the central of organizational theory-in-use'. Driven by information and facilitated by evaluation, single-loop learning, a reflexive action, therefore lies at the heart of crisis management activities.

¹¹¹ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, War History of the Imperial War Museum: Part II, January 1944 to the Reopening of the Museum on 27th November 1946', p. 19.

¹¹² IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/005/2, typed draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 4 March 1945.

Following the restoration of normal operations, those museums which do not engage in the learning process simply conclude their surface-defensive crisis management actions and put the trauma behind. The more judicious amongst them, however, extend the crisis management cycle by seeking to understand what just happened. In addition, they carry out a post-crisis analysis: exploring why the crisis occurred, and how the museum coped with it. Doing so may reveal systemic faults encompassing the underlying cause. It may also reveal better approaches towards implementing future crisis management plans (Paraskevas 2013a: p. 631). Where undertaken, this process is made possible by what Argyris and Schön (1978: p. 24) call *double-loop learning* when, after a crisis has been managed, ‘organizational inquiry [...] resolve[s] incompatible [*sic*] organizational norms by setting new priorities and weightings of norms, or by restructuring the norms themselves together with associated strategies and assumptions’. Essentially, it involves an impacted museum stabilising the crisis, and then modifying its prevailing organisational architecture such so that the same crisis is less able to resurge later (Pursiainen 2018: p. 152).

The fallout from the Second World War created a situation in which the Imperial War Museum found itself performing double-loop learning. This transpired not long after VJ-Day, when the Ministry of Works convened another conference on 14 December 1945, attended by the London national museum directors, to consider ‘whether, having regard for the time in which we lived, we should keep a scheme in being whereby art treasures could be put into safe custody if the need arose’.¹¹³ The Western world was now amid the foothills of the Cold War: the new adversary being the Soviet Union (Falode and Yakubu 2019: pp. 101-104). As in 1933, the Director-General, Bradley, attended for the

¹¹³ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/097, typed meeting minutes, ‘Storage of National Art Treasures’, 14 December 1945, p. 1.

Imperial War Museum.¹¹⁴ The delegates favoured this idea, and so over the next two years and four months, the Ministry of Works surveyed potential refuges.¹¹⁵

At the conference's second meeting on 3 May 1948, the merits and demerits of the refuges which had been surveyed were discussed. Multiple views were heard, with some delegates advocating for below ground refuges only, some for above ground refuges only, and some for both, depending on the collection.¹¹⁶ Accordingly, the conference chair from the Ministry of Works asked each delegate to detail in writing their respective institution's requirements for consideration. Bradley provided this information on 27 July 1948.¹¹⁷ The document clearly evidences an output of double-loop learning in the wake of the crisis-conducive situation just explored. Indeed, his twenty-point list of reflections and recommendations for the Imperial War Museum provides deep and rich insight into the extent that the museum reflected on its Second World War experiences (Kolb 2014). Through the text, Bradley states what happened, analyses the process, critiques the successes and failures thereof, and states what the museum would do differently to ensure the difficulties which arose would not reoccur. It demonstrates how such an activity can change a museum's world view to the effect that the museum develops and applies new beliefs and norms (Stead and Smallman 1999: p. 5).

According to Bradley, the experience of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War proved what had been theorised about its building: the former-Bethlem Royal Hospital was extremely vulnerable to aerial attack.¹¹⁸ But unexpectedly, the experience also showed that the collection was far less hardy

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/111, typed meeting minutes, 'Storage of National Art Treasures', 3 May 1948.

¹¹⁷ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/111, typed notes, 'Storage Accommodation Required by the Imperial War Museum in the Event of War', 27 July 1948.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

than first appreciated. As per Bradley's opening statement: 'Experience in the recent war shows that only the toughest objects, guns, tanks, etc., can be left at the museum during wartime with any confidence'.¹¹⁹ Many more items from the collection had to be evacuated than initially planned. Accordingly, Bradley's post-war policy recommendation for the museum regarding storage was that 'In the event of another war we shall aim at almost total evacuation'.¹²⁰ Experience also showed that the storage of collection items at country houses had been far from ideal. Aside from being difficult to access, difficult to maintain good environmental conditions within, a fire risk, and susceptible to changing hands, Bradley also reflected on their owners' un-altruistic mentality.¹²¹ As he explained: 'while the owners are pleased to receive valuable pictures, they are less willing to receive more bulky but less decorative articles, e.g. ship and other models'.¹²² Consequently, Bradley's post-war policy recommendation for museum refuges was that, in the event country houses again comprised the only refuges available, professionally managed and maintained facilities should be obtained over voluntary ones.¹²³ This had been arrived at by the museum's experience of using space sublet from the commercial storage company Messrs Bourlet and Sons, which Bradley recalled as having 'aware[ness] for proper conditions and one can feel confident that they are properly seen to'.¹²⁴ Alternatively, he recommended that the Ministry of Works oversee refuges.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

7.5 Safeguarding the Collection as Surface-Defensive Crisis Management

7.5.1 Sources of danger

The surface-defensive crisis has been introduced above as a crisis situation that impacted museums physically. This could be by damaging buildings; damaging the things inside buildings, including collections, equipment and stock; and/or disrupting staff from performing their duties, amongst other empirical effects. Having set out the premise of the surface-defensive crisis, demonstrated how the aerial attacks on London during the Second World War impacted the Imperial War Museum, and the way that the museum managed this crisis-conducive situation, the chapter now discusses how the ensuing bombings, and the museum's response to them, illustrates the surface-defensive crisis type.

Sources of danger in a surface-defensive crisis are those things which cause actual physical harm to museums or prevent work from being undertaken therein. During peacetime, such sources of danger can conceivably derive from failures in museum infrastructure, such as faulty electricals or plumbing through insufficient building maintenance (Chanter and Swallow 2007: p. 133) and damaged roofs from natural phenomena such as extreme weather events (Brumgardt 1995). Yet, during civil unrest – armed conflict, protests or riots – or natural disaster in unstable countries, likely sources could also include violence and theft, such as from fighting, vandalism and looting (Blank and Noone 2013: p. 345; Nel and Righarts 2008). The twentieth and twenty-first centuries offer many well documented examples of museums and other cultural institutions impacted in this way beyond the chapter case study (Bevan 2016).

The main surface-defensive crisis-conducive sources of danger faced by the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War were the high explosive and incendiary bombs or rockets dropped on or launched at London. This occurred over for phases: the 'Blitz' of 1940-1941 (Overy 2014: p. 73), the 'Tip and Run' raids of 1942-1943 (Goss, Cornwell and Rauchbach 2010); the 'Baby Blitz' of 1943 (Overy 2014: p. 120); and the V-1 and V-2 attacks of 1944-1945 (Campbell 2013). The intention behind them was to destroy strategic

sites and terrorise the population, and there is evidence that certain museums and galleries featured on target lists (Tonkin 2017). Indeed, one document in the IWM museum archive by Charles ffoulkes, a Trustee of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War, dated 16 September 1940, reports that German radio had mentioned the museum as an ‘object of attack’.¹²⁶

7.5.2 Potential and actual effects

In line with a surface-defensive crisis, these aerial attacks on London caused significant physical disruption to the Imperial War Museum, most if not all occurring via collateral damage. Many different ordinance types were used against the capital (Ray 2000: pp. 83-86). Typical raids combined high explosive and incendiary bombs (Overy 2014: p. 76). The later appearing V-1s and V-2s were all high explosive (Campbell 2013). High explosive ordinance damaged or demolished buildings and other structures, while incendiary ordinance started fires that could cause further damage, waylay the response by local civil defence forces and increase the precariousness of the situation. London Air Raid Precautions warden Barbra Nixon (1980: p. 26) vividly describes the effects of a high explosive bomb striking a building:

Suddenly, before I heard a sound, the shabby, ill-lit, five-storey building ahead of me swelled out like a child’s balloon, or like a Walt Disney house having hiccups. I looked at it in astonishment, that bricks and mortar could stretch like rubber. At the point when it must burst, the glass fell out. It did not hurtle, it simply cracked and dropped out, allowing the straining building to deflate and return to normal.

The result was devastation to the building’s internal fabric, as occurred with the Imperial War Museum and the strike on the Naval Gallery in January 1941.

¹²⁶ IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/039, typed report, ‘Report of Air Raid Damage’.

The Naval Gallery event was the most destructive incident to befall the Imperial War Museum during the aerial attacks. But it was not the only one. Blasts from high explosive bombs detonating in the near vicinity repeatedly caused windows to shatter, walls to crack and ceilings to cave, requiring continuous ‘first aid repairs’ to keep the building functional.¹²⁷ This effect was termed ‘progressive wrecking’¹²⁸ in the museum’s unpublished war history, creating uncomfortable conditions for the staff who remained there (Blaikley 1941b). Other incidents involved incendiary bombs falling on the building. Such events required prompt responses to prevent the building from being consumed by fire owing to its vulnerable architecture: comprising a three wing, four storey angular ‘U’ shaped structure built of external brick walls; slate, timber and zinc roofing; and internal timber walls and floors.¹²⁹ If left unchecked, incendiary bombs could burn for around 15 minutes (Overy 2014: p. 76).

7.5.3 Practical and critical significance

The practical significance of the aerial attacks on London to the Imperial War Museum underscores the surface-defensive crisis by preventing the institution from meeting its normal aims and objectives. They cause disruption through constraining museums, inhibiting institutional capability and capacity (Pursiainen 2018: pp. 79-81, 85-88). This articulation holds with the classical reading of crisis (Koselleck 2006: p. 161), that something is teetering between sure-footed continuance and non-existence; an understanding which informs the concept’s contemporary medical definition: ‘a dangerous state of illness in which it is uncertain whether the sufferer will recover or not’ (Marcovitch 2017). The aerial attacks on London had this practical dimension for the Imperial War Museum. As discussed in chapter six (see section 6.5), they

¹²⁷ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, ‘War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943’, p. 14.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 10, 13.

prevented it from admitting the general public. And as discussed in this chapter, they threatened the integrity of museum's building and its collections, causing certain collection items to be evacuated for their protection and damage to be sustained by the building and those collection items which were not evacuated.

This limited critical significance of the London bombings to the Imperial War Museum also underscores a surface-defensive crisis. Surface-defensive crises are concerned with ruptures in the lived environment rather than some disconnect from societal values. Hence a museum impacted by some surface-defensive crisis has not departed from the norms and expectations of society, but rather become threatened with operational and likely rapid collapse. This restricts the critique of the crisis situation to the museum itself, for its relationship with wider society is superfluous as regards such events. Further underscoring a surface-defensive crisis, the Imperial War Museum did not become disconnected from societal values through the London bombings. The government continued to support the museum with finance and legitimacy throughout the war years. Moreover, a realisation that the museum building was needed for war work, discussed during chapter six (see subsection 6.6.4), ensured that mutterings about the futility of the repairs were kept in check.¹³⁰

7.5.4 Mitigating measures

The response by the Imperial War Museum to the aerial attacks on London during the Second World War involved minimising organisational disruption, the core objective when mitigating surface-defensive crisis. Taking inspiration from medicine, surface-defensive crisis requires a museum to treat the problem through instigating activities that draw on the recovery conceptualisation of resilience (Maguire and Cartwright 2008: p. 4). Put another way, when mid-crisis, the impacted museum must prevent the situation from causing its collapse. When post-crisis, the museum must restore as much pre-crisis

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

capability and capacity as possible. The work of surface-defensive crisis management therefore is to maintain an existing paradigm, notwithstanding the structural changes needed so that the same or a similar crisis does not reoccur, or the fact that on a human emotion level the trauma from such situations can create contexts that feel alien to the beforetimes (Elieli and Gould 1995: p. 29).

Exemplifying this response, from the moment that the danger of the aerial attacks was conceived, the Imperial War Museum pursued a crisis management strategy towards building up its defences. This involved enhancing the building's capacity to withstand the effects that the bombing might pose. It also involved enhancing the staff's capability to mitigate such situations (Pursiainen 2018: pp. 79-81, 85-88). Accordingly, when the aerial attacks materialised, a combination of a reinforced building and staff trained at preventing danger from taking hold and spreading ensured that the museum survived without irrevocable damage. Moreover, action to evacuate certain moveable collection items – if at first insubstantial – successfully decoupled those items from sustaining any/further bomb damage. And once the aerial attacks had ceased, the response involved reversing the disruption which the bombings caused.

It is important to note that the staff of the Imperial War Museum were fundamental in achieving a satisfactory outcome to this surface-defensive crisis-conducive situation. They conducted fire watching and air raid precautions patrols 24 hours a day, 7 days per week, at great personal risk. Fire watching patrols comprised one or two Museum Attendants who would keep watch throughout the building's upper floors for incendiary bombs which might fall on the roof and potentially break through into the internal structure, combusting when they struck.¹³¹ Air raid precautions patrols, by contrast, comprised a team of Museum Attendants ready to protect locations throughout the museum from

¹³¹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/STA/001, typed notice, 'Fireguarding', 20 October 1942.

any related threat.¹³² Through defending the Imperial War Museum in this way, the staff, using their skills, knowledge and increasing experience, prevented the crisis-conducive situation from consuming it. As the unpublished war history states: ‘Praise is due to them for having saved the building from fire on three separate occasions without outside assistance’.¹³³

7.6 Chapter Conclusion

The aerial attacks on London severely impacted the Imperial War Museum. They threatened, and at times catalysed, considerable physical damage to both the museum building and the collection items contained therein, in turn forcing it to close over public safety concerns which severed contact between the museum and its constituents and evacuate collection items from the building. The resulting situation had a significant impact, posing structural, functional, and institutional ramifications that prevented routine operations from being performed during and well beyond the Second World War years themselves.

Given that unpredictable, unstable, and dangerous disruption comprises a signature of crisis, the Imperial War Museum clearly experienced a crisis-conducive situation which conformed to a surface-defensive crisis through the aerial attacks. By engaging with this concept over the case study, the thesis demonstrates that museums are vulnerable to systemic ruptures. Whether internal or external, an intentional act or naturally occurring, they diminish a museum’s ability to meet their aims and objectives. The necessary response involves preventing the relevant sources of danger from arising or as

¹³² IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/002/5, typed notes, three-page untitled and undated document headed with ‘A.R.P. Patrol’ and ‘The Function of A.R.P. Patrol’ on page 1, ‘Equipment’, ‘Gas Alarm’, ‘Prolonged Spells of Duty’ and ‘Stirrup Pumps and Redhill Units’ on page 2, and ‘Duty Period’, ‘Staff Shelter’, ‘Alternative Use of Staff Shelter as A.R.P. Headquarters’ and ‘General Orders’ on page 3, pp. 2-3, p. 1.

¹³³ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, ‘War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943’, p. 19.

demonstrated with the response by the Imperial War Museum against the aerial attacks on London, preventing them from having a catastrophic impact.

In drawing this conclusion, the chapter demonstrates the need for a robust defensive crisis management strategy when mitigating surface-defensive crisis. The approach of the Imperial War Museum, for example, was to pursue a strategy that holistically built up and maintained its organisational resilience against the aerial attacks on London. After detecting the possibility of being impacted by this threat in 1933, the museum prepared various contingency measures. It identified collection items for evacuation, arranged refuges wherein they could be stored away from harm and also made the collection items that remained in situ and the museum building as protected as possible. When the aerial attacks finally began, the measures were implemented. Later, after the Second World War concluded, the museum undertook a recovery programme that involved restoring its building and instigating a public museological service. And finally, in the wake of the crisis, yet with another similar crisis loomed over the horizon, the museum reflected on its experience of the Second World War and improved the crisis management strategy which it previously developed. The overall result was the necessary ability to safeguard its collection. Indeed, without a robust defensive crisis management strategy, the impact posed by the aerial attacks could have been much worse for the Imperial War Museum. Neither its collection nor the assets which ensured the viability of the collection may have survived the conflict sufficiently intact for the institution to reopen.

The surface-defensive crisis was not the only crisis-conducive situation experienced by the Imperial War Museum over the Second World War. Founded during 1917 as a museum on the 'war to end all war', the Second World War saw it stare down the barrel of incongruence with society once the legacy of the First World War ceased to represent that Wellsian idea. This threatened the Imperial War Museum with cultural irrelevancy: an undesirable position for any museum as it threatens their legitimacy and, in turn, the support they enjoy from their stakeholders and constituents. Consequently, the Imperial War Museum undertook concurrent crisis management to also avert that possibility from transpiring. This comprises the focus of the next chapter and those thereafter.

Chapter 8 Reconceiving the Institution, 1939: Deep-Revolutionary Crisis Management at the Imperial War Museum

8.1 Chapter Introduction

Crises have been defined in this study as comprising an unpredictable, unstable, and potentially dangerous situation, where the impacted museum or other systemic entity will be disrupted, perhaps inoperably and irreparably, requiring extraordinary intervention to be overcome. By describing them as dangerous and disruptive however, this definition encompasses more than just physical dangers and disruption that threaten the life and limb of staff or the operations of museums, as can be potentiated by surface-defensive crises considered in chapter seven. It also encompasses intangible dangers and disruption. These comprise shifting societal values. It follows that different crisis conditions produce different situations, requiring different resolutions and strategies.

Following on from chapter seven, this thesis continues to explore the ways in which the Imperial War Museum was affected by crisis-conducive situations and how it responded against them during the Second World War era. Accordingly, I argue over the next three chapters that institutions are at risk from evolving societal interests and practices, a phenomenon Montgomery Van Wart (1995: p. 429) calls ‘value shifts’. For museums which do not take account of these value shifts through ‘value adjustments’, the societal changes they can catalyse may result in diminishing legitimacy and disrupted sustainability. To overcome such crises, museums must mount a revolutionary response. This corresponds with the modern reading of crisis established in chapter four (see subsection 4.3.1), where an impacted museum’s continuance or conclusion depends on whether they can ‘emancipate’ themselves (Milstein 2015: p. 145) through developing out from the crisis (Koselleck 2006: p. 172). The current chapter therefore considers the response by the Imperial War Museum against the anticipated threat of post-war cultural irrelevancy as the Second World War approached. Along with chapters nine and ten, I argue that the threat comprised

a crisis-conducive situation which could only be resolved through a systemic transformation, and exemplify an approach for dealing with it. In this particular chapter I also argue that revolutionary responses require socio-politically legitimate strategies to succeed. In undertaking the above, the chapter helps address aim three, objective three; aim four, objectives two and three; aim five, objectives two and three; and aim six, objectives two and three of this study.

Concern had been mounting with the Director-General of the Imperial War Museum, Leslie Bradley, for some time before the Second World War that the institution might lose the interest and support of new and existing constituents if the museum did not update its remit to represent the new world reality following another war. Indeed, he wrote very pessimistically about the potential situation. In one example, on 12 September 1939, Bradley informed Henry Ludwig Mond, 2nd Baron Melchett, a Trustee of the Imperial War Museum, his view that ‘the extension of the Museum [...] seems to me to be absolutely vital to its continued existence’.¹³⁴ And in another example, on 22 September 1939, he informed the Secretary of the Treasury his belief that if the reinvention did not take place, ‘the interest and utility of the museum will be greatly reduced if, and when, it is reopened to the public’.¹³⁵

To understand the crisis-conducive situation that this threat risked afflicting on the Imperial War Museum and explore the institution’s response against it, the current chapter deploys two crisis concepts. One is the *deep-revolutionary crisis*, another novel crisis type I have theorised towards this research that helps convey the nature of the above crisis-conducive situation experienced by the Imperial War Museum. The type derives from intangible phenomena, producing effects which must be embraced by an impacted museum if it is to survive. The other concept is Christine M. Pearson and Ian I. Mitroff’s

¹³⁴ IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/051/1, typed letter, anon. to Melchett, 12 September 1939.

¹³⁵ TNA, T 162/742/3, typed letter, Bradley to the Secretary, 22 September 1939, p. 2.

(1993) general five-stage framework for crisis management, formally introduced in chapter four (see section 4.4) and used throughout chapter seven.

This chapter explores the above over three substantive sections. The first section (8.2) here contextualises the deep-revolutionary crisis. It sets out the premise of the type and what the type signifies. The following substantive section (8.3) then begins exploring the initial response by the Imperial War Museum to the anticipated threat from post-war cultural irrelevancy. Drawing on the first two stages of Pearson and Mitroff's general five-stage framework for crisis management, 'signal detection' and 'preparation', the section commences by considering the process at the Imperial War Museum of making sense of the crisis-conducive situation. It then explores the process of seeking the requisite permission to enact the appropriate response. And the last substantive section (8.4) explores the received wisdom surrounding the professional legacy of the Director-General, Leslie Bradley. It assesses whether the received wisdom is accurate and fair, and the role Bradley played in mitigating the crisis-conducive situation. Finally, because the response to the threat of post-war cultural irrelevancy is considered over three chapters, the current chapter does not include a discussion on how the case exemplifies deep-revolutionary crisis, as was included with chapter seven. Rather, this is located in chapter ten (10.4), ensuring the case be fully explicated before resemblances are drawn.

8.2 Deep-Revolutionary Crisis

The deep-revolutionary crisis represents a systemic crisis that amalgamates the basic understanding of the crisis concept with two descriptors that emphasise this crisis type's distinctive characteristics, similarly to the surface-defensive crisis introduced in the previous chapter (see section 7.2). The first descriptor, *deep*, informs the deep-revolutionary crisis' practical and critical significance to an impacted museum. The second descriptor, *revolutionary*, informs the impact that the deep-revolutionary crisis has on a museum, and the aims of the preventive or mitigative measures which should be deployed to deal with it.

Threats associated with the deep-revolutionary crisis are intangible. They derive from breakdowns in the bilateral transactions between a museum and communities from the social system (Devlin 2007: p. 10). These breakdowns could be due to disapproval from communities at an action of the museum. Or it could be due to divergence between the museum's role or purpose and communities' expectations thereof. Either way, as with the surface-defensive crisis, they can comprise both black swan and king dragon events discussed in chapter four (Taleb 2007; Sornette 2009; see subsection 4.3.3).

A deep-revolutionary crisis may at first appear innocuous compared with the surface-defensive crisis. But this misses the bigger picture about the significance of the type. They can profoundly and insidiously impact on an affected museum. Although the deep-revolutionary crisis does not cause physical disruption, it destabilises *raison d'être* and rationale, often over protracted periods. In doing so, the type can disrupt the legitimacy underpinning a museum. Accordingly, while they pose little if any danger to the functional integrity of an impacted museum, they are, nonetheless, the reason why operationally sound museums collapse: through losing the requisite social, political, economic, and cultural support to remain viable mid- and long-term. The purpose of deep-revolutionary crisis management is to replace a failing organisational paradigm with an alternative, more sustainable one. As demonstrated by Figure 12, this can be achieved through making sufficient change to a museum until the issues causing the misalignment are absorbed into it and rendered non-existent. Otherwise, the crisis situation will diminish the museum's legitimacy until it can no longer function. Deep-revolutionary crisis management is therefore indicative of a transitional process: a pushing forward through the crisis to a fresh coherence with the social system and a new social contract (Milstein 2015: p. 145). Consequently, the deep-revolutionary crisis comprises a type that draws on the concept's modern reading mentioned above. Moreover, it aligns with the transformation conceptualisation of resilience discussed in chapter six (see section 6.3), where the focus concerns an ability to adapt out from difficulty (Shaw and Maythorne 2011: p. 46).

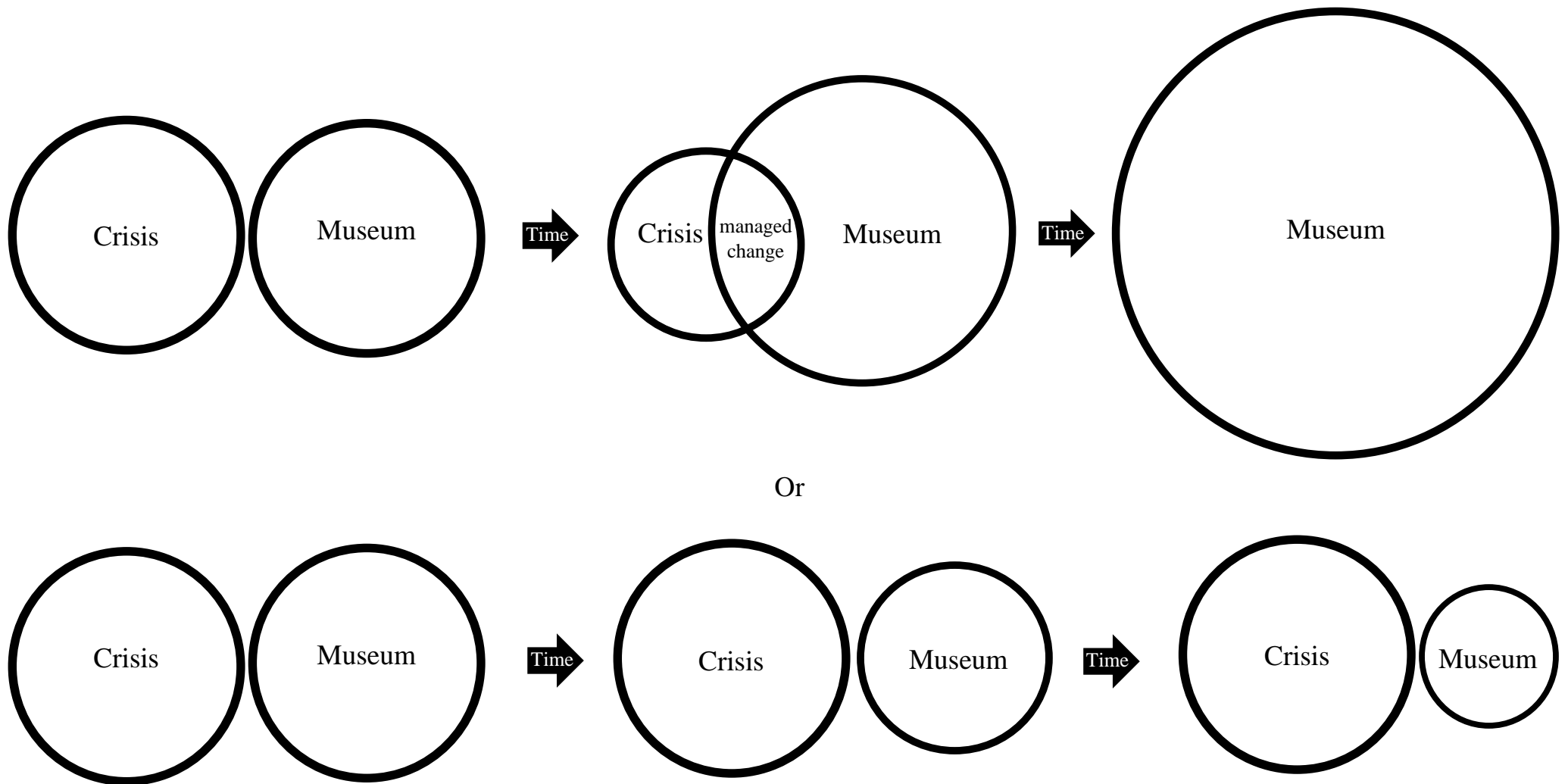


Figure 12 – A diagram illustrating the two possible outcomes of deep-revolutionary crisis on a museum. The museum that absorbs the issues causing its misalignment with the social systems will have increased legitimacy. Those which do not will lose legitimacy.

8.3 Mitigating the Crisis of Irrelevancy, 1939

8.3.1 *Detecting the crisis*

As discussed in chapter seven (see subsection 7.4.1), crisis management commences with signal detection (Pearson and Mitroff 1993). This involves undertaking risk assessments (Pursiainen 2018: pp. 9-16) to distinguish red flags from background noise and to ascertain their credibility (Al Luhaidan and Alrazeeni 2019). It is indeterminable when such activities were carried out at the Imperial War Museum regarding the threat of post-war cultural irrelevancy as the Second World War approached. The same can also be said for the exact person who initially recognised and appreciated the problem. This difficulty has transpired because the earliest discovered document concerning the matter provides no insight about how long the threat had been conceived for, nor by whom. The source in question is a letter dated 7 June 1939 by Leslie Bradley, Director-General of the Imperial War Museum, to P. F. R. Beards, the Private Secretary of the Deputy Under-Secretary of State for War:

I have from time to time urged upon the Chairman of the Board, Sir Bertram Cubitt, the desirability of establishing relations with the Service, and other Departments, with a view to the preservation of the records and relics of any future war, but his attitude is, first, that such Departments have far too many other things to consider, and that in any case the handing over of such relics and records to this Museum will be automatic in the event of another war.¹³⁶

What can be determined from this document, however, is that red flags had been detected at the Imperial War Museum well before the Second World War commenced. Moreover, it reveals that Bradley himself had received the signals, legitimised them, and was contemplating the necessary resolution for the

¹³⁶ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUS/034, typed letter, Bradley to Beards, 7 June 1939.

problem (Milstein 2015 pp. 151-152): a new contemporary collecting programme which would enable the Imperial War Museum to reinvent itself.

In addition, perhaps the most informative aspect of the 7 June letter is the insight it offers into the way Bradley was making sense of the prospective danger of post-war cultural irrelevancy. Sense making is an important skill in signal detection, indeed crisis management generally. The earlier an emerging threat can be identified, the sooner it can be dealt with. Moreover, if during that process the crisis' sources, traits and ramifications are quickly understood, the more likely the crisis will be mitigated (Boin *et al.* 2017: p. 23). But sense making is especially important in the context of deep-revolutionary crisis. Unlike surface-defensive crises discussed over chapter seven, deep-revolutionary crises do not overtly exhibit danger. This means that their practical and critical significance may be more elusive than crises of empirical origin.

Despite its importance to the efficacy of crisis management, sense making, as with signal detection overall, is not easily accomplished. A museum's complexity may mask a crisis' onset. Barriers in museums may prevent staff from raising the alarm or prevent crisis management infrastructure from being established. And the subjectiveness of crisis may mean some people do not perceive a threat where one exists (*ibid.*: pp. 23-32). Accordingly, the crisis managers confronting deep-revolutionary crises must be adept at reading crisis situations, otherwise they may underappreciate them (*ibid.*: pp. 39-40). While no specific attributes suffice sense making, research shows that experience and intensive training (see Roe and Schulman 2008), intuition (see Kahneman and Klein 2009; Kahneman 2011; Klein 2017) and organisational structures or cultures that institute proactive scanning for problems in the environment (see Rochlin 1996; Hopkins 2009; Weick and Sutcliffe 2015) help.

Bradley's emergent sensing of the sources, characteristics, and consequences of the crisis-conducive situation confronting the Imperial War Museum as the Second World War approached is demonstrated through his desire to ensure that the museum did not suffer from the same handicap that

hampered its collecting activities during the previous world war. When the War Cabinet instituted the Imperial War Museum on 5 March 1917, the First World War had been underway for more than two years. Over this time, a considerable amount of war material, particularly ephemera, entered circulation, but soon disappeared without any specimens having been collected. For many years to come, numerous pre-1917 items, specimens big and small, remained unrepresented in the museum's collection, some even as late as the Second World War around 22 years later. A repeated experience would threaten the same implications for any new collection which, in turn, risked limiting the effectiveness of the crisis management strategy. After all, the more fulsome the contemporary collection, the more relevant the museum to future audiences and researchers' wants and needs (Rhys and Baveystock 2014).

This concern over losing the opportunity to collect material from the new ongoing conflict is clearly evidenced through three letters which Bradley sent to various members of the government during September 1939. In each letter, he earnestly and urgently requested that they assist the Imperial War Museum undertake a contemporary collecting initiative through organising or influencing informal earmarking and storing material across their respective departments until custody could be assumed by the institution. The first such letter was sent on 11 September 1939 to the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Kingsley Wood:

I consider it my duty to bring this matter to your notice now because the utility of the Museum and the completeness of its record have always been hampered by the fact that the systematic collection of material did not begin until 1917, and unless immediate steps are taken in this matter another unrecoverable gap will be formed. [...] How long, for instance,

will it be possible to obtain copies of the leaflets which have been dropped in Germany?¹³⁷

The Lord Privy Seal, Sir Samuel Hoare, was sent the second a day later:

[The Imperial War Museum] has never been able to attain completeness owing to the impossibility of tracing all that was lost during the first half of the [last] war when no systematic effort was made to collect a record of activities on what is commonly called the 'Home Front'. [...] Our experience, and that of the many who have made use of our records for the completion of books about the Great War, is that the very beginning of a war is the only time for such collection to be begun, a final pruning being much simpler than the filling of complete gaps.¹³⁸

And the Home Secretary, Sir John Anderson, who also doubled up as Minister for Home Security, was sent the third a further two days on from that:

Both we and they [those who used the institution's collections for war research during the run up to the Second World War] have [...] suffered from comparative paucity of records and material for the earlier half of the [last] war when no systematic collection was made, much of the material disappearing, for instance, when the paper shortage led to the pulping down of all obsolete printed papers, and in the constant stress of dealing immediately with fresh problems. [...] [T]he last few years have

¹³⁷ TNA, AIR 2/10188, typed letter, Bradley to Secretary of State for Air, 11 September 1939, pp. 1-2.

¹³⁸ TNA, HO 186/2097, typed letter, Bradley to Lord Privy Seal, 12 September 1939, pp. 1-2.

amply proved the convenience of keeping a complete record of war measures accessible for reference in a future emergency.¹³⁹

The ramifications of not extending its subject remit was also underscored in a letter Bradley sent to Sir James Ross, Deputy Secretary of the Air Ministry, on 24 October 1939. Summed up in one sentence, he wrote: ‘I could see no future for the Museum if it was to remain merely a Museum of the last war but one’.¹⁴⁰

Consequently, while Bradley cannot be confirmed as the individual who first detected the threat of post-war irrelevancy at the Imperial War Museum, he had certainly been convinced by the danger it posed and sensed that an appropriate strategy involved updating the institution’s *raison d’être* and rationale. Through reaching this understanding, it can be seen that the four core requirements for major systemic change, established in chapter four (see subsection 4.6.2), had begun to be attained by the institution: dissatisfaction with the *status quo*, an emerging conception of the alternative desired state, understanding about the necessary first steps for reaching that state, and an imperative which outweighed the holistic cost (Beckhard 1975: p. 45).

8.3.2 Preventing the crisis

After a crisis has been detected, as also discussed in chapter seven (see subsection 7.4.2), an impacted museum must mitigate the situation by working towards either preventing the problem from materialising or by preparing to withstand it (Pearson and Mitroff 1993). Both outcomes are achieved through determining the type of crisis being confronted and formulating an appropriate mitigating strategy (Paraskevas 2013a: pp. 629-630). Chapter seven, for example, showed that the aerial attacks on London during the Second World War could not be prevented from impacting the Imperial War Museum. The

¹³⁹ TNA, HO 186/2097, typed letter, Bradley to Secretary of State for the Home Department and Minister of Home Security, 14 September 1939, pp. 1-2.

¹⁴⁰ TNA, AIR 2/10188, typed letter, Bradley to Ross, 24 October 1939, p. 1.

mitigating strategy in this instance hence revolved around resistance. Yet with the danger posed by post-war cultural irrelevancy, a strategy of resistance would be ineffective as there was no tangible force to be resisted. Rather, this crisis-conducive situation required some preventative strategy involving material and philosophical change at the museum – establishing an alternative paradigm.

It is clear that Bradley was convinced about the necessity of extending the subject remit on which the Imperial War Museum had been founded. But conviction alone was not enough to instigate the process. He also needed permission from those who held ultimate responsibility for the museum and who would be liable if the extension produced repercussions: the Board of Trustees. Accordingly, the prevention stage of this crisis-conducive situation can be seen as unfolding over a two-fold process. The first, considered in the current chapter, involved seeking the requisite permission. The second part, which the following two chapters focus on, involved executing the systemic change.

This need for approval by the Board of Trustees helps counter a commonly held misconception of crisis management that crisis strategy and decision making is a responsibility held by executive leaders and those leaders alone. Such circumstances are rarely the case. Usually, the formulation and execution of crisis management relies on multiple personnel with varying seniority and skill sets (Boin *et al.* 2017: pp. 49-50). The same applies to organisational change. Museums cannot be changed by executive leaders in a vacuum or in silos. The process requires input from agents at all echelons and departments of the museum to ensure it is not only effective but also appropriate (Janes 2013: pp. 44-50; Bienkowski and McGowan 2021: p. 123).

Bradley formally raised the extension of the subject remit of the Imperial War Museum with the Board of Trustees on 20 June 1939.¹⁴¹ While the ensuing discussion is the first mentioned in the board meeting minutes since November

¹⁴¹ IWM, MA, EN1/1/COB/049/2, typed draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 20 June 1939, p. 2.

1933, it would unlikely have been the Trustees' first encounter with the idea. As suggested by his letter to P. F. R. Beards on 7 June 1939, Bradley indicates that he was a vocal proponent of the extension. Moreover, the way the minutes record how the matter was raised suggests it had often been discussed off the record: 'The Secretary reported that in connection with the consideration of the question of the preservation and custody of relics in the event of war [...]'.¹⁴² If Bradley had hoped for a quick approval, however, he would of been sorely disappointed. In response to the proposal, the Trustees 'laid it down that it was for the Government to decide whether and where such relics and records were to be kept'.¹⁴³ The reason for this decision requires some interpretation.

When Bradley proposed the extension on 20 June, he acknowledged that following interaction about the matter with officials at the War Office, certain individuals there had 'enquired [about] the exact terms of the Imperial War Museum Act'.¹⁴⁴ It seems this admission to the Board of Trustees raised questions about the socio-political regulative legitimacy of what Bradley was proposing (Zimmerman and Zeitz 2002: p. 418). Unlike surface-defensive crisis management, which is focussed on preserving organisational paradigms, deep-revolutionary crisis management is focussed on creating new organisational paradigms. Such action needs to remain in regulatory alignment with the prevailing frameworks that govern a museum. Otherwise, the action risks attracting sanctions and disrepute (*ibid.*). This outcome can subsequently catalyse a broad reduction of legitimacy as discussed in chapter seven (see subsection 7.4.3), significantly reducing support from stakeholders and society.

The *Imperial War Museum Act 1920* itself was, and remains, quite a straightforward piece of parliamentary legislation. Incorporating amendments made through the 1986 and 1988 *Imperial War Museum (Board of Trustees) Orders*, it still contributes towards the legal framework underpinning the

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

museum, although does so now alongside additional legislation such as the *Imperial War Museum Act 1955* and the *Museums and Galleries Act 1992* (IWM 2020: p. 88). During the Second World War there existed six sections to the *Imperial War Museum Act 1920*. The first three were the most significant: section one defined the governing body of the Imperial War Museum, the Board of Trustees, and laid down the terms for its governance; section two set out the scope of the influence and power of the Board of Trustees; and section three established the core policies through which collection material could be gifted, acquired, or transferred to the institution. Sections four, five and six, by contrast, detailed staffing and expenses arrangements, the museum's non-charitable status, and guidance on the legislation's citation and interpretation. Although fairly uninhibiting overall, there remained one clause in section two which may, had the Treasury exercised their right, have proved a barrier to the museum specifically purchasing exhibits. This was clause 2d, stating that 'subject to the consent of the Treasury, [the Trustees may] apply any money received by them [...] in the purchase of any object which in the opinion of the Board it is desirable to acquire for the Museum'. Accordingly, the Treasury could potentially veto any prospective acquisition made using government funding.

At many non-profit organisations, such as museums, trustees are often not just responsible for their institution's conduct, but also liable when that conduct has negative ramifications. Charges against trustees can therefore arise from various contexts of perceived negligence. As Douglas A. Johnston (1988: p. 77) explains: 'Normally, board members are liable personally when they fail to fulfil one of the duties of all board members: (1) the duty of diligence; (2) the duty of obedience; and (3) the duty of loyalty'. This in turn means trustees are subject to multiple dimensions of personal and collective accountability, with collective and personal ramifications potentially befalling them if anything avoidable occurs which harms the organisation or contravenes its established governing framework (Burcaw 1997: p. 205). Accordingly, Johnston (1988: p. 78) recommends that 'To avoid liability for actions beyond the scope of their duties,

board members should conduct their duties strictly within their governing rules, whether in statute, charter or bylaws'. The inference of this recommendation is that trustees may adopt, deliberately or otherwise, a conservative philosophy in the broadest understanding when dispensing their duties (see Hamilton 2020).

Considering the provisions of the *Imperial War Museum Act 1920*, it is reasonable to posit that this context influenced the Trustees' caution over Bradley's proposal for the institution's extension. By vesting them with 'general management and control', the act made each board member a legal guardian, who kept the museum in trust. Accordingly, had the extension been met with disapproval from key governmental figures or departments, or been undertaken unlawfully, or against existing governance policies, this legislation meant they, not Bradley, would be the ones found responsible for the activity. With queries arising from the War Office over the scope and influences of the *Imperial War Museum Act 1920*, it is therefore unsurprising that the Trustees sought clarification over whether Bradley's proposal had regulatory legitimacy.

Ideally, the next step for Bradley was to raise the question about extending the subject remit of the Imperial War Museum with the government via the Treasury. Such was the caution with which the Board of Trustees treated the proposal however, the Chair of the Board, Sir Bertram Cubitt, instructed that its legality first be considered by the Treasury Solicitor's Office – a subordinate Treasury department advising and acting for those government departments which did not possess their own legal team (Wilding and Laundry 1968: p. 732).¹⁴⁵ Cubitt had formally been the Assistant Secretary of the War Office (anon. 1942). Despite retiring in 1926, he maintained contacts with senior personnel there such as Sir Herbert Creedy, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for War (anon. 1973).¹⁴⁶ This may have further exposed him to the

¹⁴⁵ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUS/034, typed letter, Secretary to Kinsman, 27 June 1939.

¹⁴⁶ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUS/034, handwritten letter, Cubitt to Bradley, 23 June 1939.

concerns emanating from individuals at the War Office about the *Imperial War Museum Act 1920* and its limitations on the institution's subject remit.

Bradley sent a letter by Cubitt concerning this matter along with a copy of the *Imperial War Museum Act 1920* to the Treasury Solicitor's Office on 27 July 1939. The government lawyer who looked at it was J. C. P. Kinsman. His review of the act found that 'there does not appear to be anything in the act to prevent the Trustees from accepting the custody of future relics of a future war'.¹⁴⁷ Highlighting, perhaps, the Trustees' unnecessarily cautious behaviour over the matter, he appended his written judgment with the following pithy remark to Cubitt: 'I am at a loss to understand how the question ever arose'.¹⁴⁸

This verdict is significant because it debunked key assumptions about the Imperial War Museum during those formative years as regards to the institution's *raison d'être* and rationale. Through doing so, it also raises implications here for the crisis management then being performed at the museum. On the first issue, the *Imperial War Museum Act 1920* currently comprises a cornerstone of the constitution of the Imperial War Museum (IWM 2020: p. 54). But during 1920, it was the constitution, as discussed above in this subsection and chapter five (see subsection 5.3.3). Indeed, a search of Hansard, of previously enacted legislation and of the museum's documentation reveals no other legally binding source of policy or procedure. Sources sought in this regard included, for example, government statements to Parliament, Acts of Parliament and statutory rules and orders, and edicts from the government and civil service. Accordingly, no such foundational documentation which dictated the institution's precise mission seemingly existed. Further underlining this, in 1927, Charles ffoulkes, the then Curator and Secretary of the Imperial War Museum, had similarly enquired at the Treasury Solicitor's Office whether the museum could also collect and display 'obsolete [pre-First World War] weapons

¹⁴⁷ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUS/034, handwritten letter, Kinsman to Bradley, 29 June 1939.

¹⁴⁸ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUS/034, handwritten letter, Cubitt to Bradley, 23 June 1939.

of very early date'. The response received from the Treasury Solicitor's Office informed him how: 'The Act is in very general terms. It gives wide discretion to the Trustees as to the objects to be acquired and exhibited'. All this indicates that during 1939 the Imperial War Museum had a large degree of autonomy and that any limitations which the institution observed were entirely self-imposed.

The above observation may provoke some debate over the authenticity of this deep-revolutionary crisis-conducive situation which Bradley was racing to address during 1939. Put another way, it could raise questions over whether any crisis actually existed at the Imperial War Museum in the first place. Indeed, an argument might reasonably be forwarded by those who adopt positivist-leaning epistemologies towards crisis that without clear-cut 'structural phenomena' (Whitehead *et al.* 2019: p. 2) – for example, foundational documentation dictating the institution's precise mission – the situation confronting the museum did not embody a manifested crisis, but rather an alarming illusion which posed no real world consequences to the institution. Alan Knight (2015: p. 35) helpfully styles such situations as 'fictitious or contrived or, at the very least, hyperbolic crises: those in which widespread fears are out of proportion to any objective threat'. Yet an argument could also be forwarded by those who adopt constructivist-leaning epistemologies that the absence of clear-cut structural phenomena actually makes little difference over the effectiveness of perceived crises to crisis communities, because ultimately the sense of the impact of any crisis depends on the subjective perception of a broad array of apparent tangible and intangible phenomena comprising the lived environment. If this was the case, then despite being more illusory than empirical, the deep-revolutionary crisis confronting the Imperial War Museum would have appeared no less real and therefore still represented a threat which engendered action to address it. As Knight observes in the context of more broad-based situations: 'fictitious crises, the product of error or deliberate obfuscation or both, can have major, even momentous, consequences. This becomes possible, of course, because "crisis", as an emic term, denotes a public mood, a collective sentiment' (*ibid.*).

Taking Kinsman's verdict and the various issues raised by the subsequent discussion into account, it is clear that the perception of the situation of the Imperial War Museum was quite far removed from the reality inhabited. There existed no binding apparatus which restricted collecting and display work to the First World War only. Yet the freedoms actually available to the institution seemingly did not diminish the deep-revolutionary crisis consciousness that prevailed. This would appear because, while no foundational documentation dictated the precise mission of the Imperial War Museum, other phenomena existed which could have raised at least an impression of rigidity regarding its subject remit. The following are three examples, explicated in chapter five. First was the institution's *raison d'être*, manifested by the prevailing collection amassed over its initial 19 years (see subsection 5.4.2). Indeed, despite being encumbered by few parameters, this body of objects had been dogmatically confined to material derived from or regarding the First World War. The second was its formative, deep-rooted rationale, widely understood since the opening ceremony as a museum on the 'war to end all war' (see section 5.2). And the third was its public profile, which had developed and solidified since 1920 as an institution concerning affairs over 1914-1918 (see sections 5.2 and 5.4).

Regarding the implications for the crisis management being performed at the Imperial War Museum, the above infers that this institution inhabited an unusual condition during 1939. A sense of crisis effected conceptions and behaviours there which served to stymie the work undertaken towards the crisis-conducive situation's own resolution. Indeed, as prudent as the Board of Trustees caution may have been from a legitimacy perspective, addressing the requirements they imposed waylaid the response of the Imperial War Museum to the threat of post-war cultural irrelevancy. Delays, whenever they occur, can have serious detrimental effects against any crisis management. They occupy time that might otherwise be used to prevent, prepare for, or mitigate a crisis situation. On dealing with fast paced crises, which surface-defensive crises usually embody, crisis discourse often emphasises the golden hour just after

signal detection wherein necessary action for successfully addressing a crisis situation is performed (Garcia 2006: p. 4). During slow paced crises, which deep-revolutionary crises usually occupy, however, the crisis situation will likely not require such rapid responses. Yet this does not mean the crisis management response can be slack. As with the response by the Imperial War Museum to the threat of post-war cultural irrelevancy, deep-revolutionary crises might necessitate complex resolutions requiring extensive preventative work. It follows that the greater the incremental delay experienced over such a crisis management process, the greater the detriment on the outcome (*ibid.*).

On 22 September 1939, 19 days after the declaration of war by the United Kingdom and 85 days after Kinsman's judgment on the *Imperial War Museum Act* 1920, Bradley was finally authorised to approach the Treasury. The reason for the lull throughout July, August and September is unclear. In one letter sent to the Trustees outlining the process through which the eventual permission had been secured, Bradley stated that 'As soon as the evacuation of the most valuable pictures and photographs from the Museum was completed, I obtained the Chairman's permission to seek the decision which the Trustees asked for at their last meeting'.¹⁴⁹ But this statement masks a more complex picture.

Contrary evidence shows Bradley was eager to seek the decision of the Treasury as soon as possible, suggesting that he was aware about the problem delays in this critical period might entail. On 7 July 1939, just over one week on from Kinsman's judgment, the War Office informed him that it too had concluded 'the Imperial War Museum is the proper body to deal with the preservation of the records and relics of any future war'.¹⁵⁰ Bradley responded three days later, commencing his letter by stating that 'I think personally it is very desirable to take steps to get our organization ready so that it can start to function at the

¹⁴⁹ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUS/034, typed letter, template of correspondence from Bradley to the Trustees.

¹⁵⁰ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUS/034, typed letter, Redman to Bradley, 7 July 1939.

outset', and concluding with the question: 'When, and how, can we start?'¹⁵¹ No other evidence has been discovered from the archive wherein he expressed a desire to wait until after the evacuation of the Imperial War Museum. Whatever the reason for it, this delay until 22 September 1939 risked irreparably diminishing the institution's contemporary collecting programme. Ultimately, the whole episode serves to further emphasise the significance of the mind in the creation of crisis, when even the approach to resolving a crisis is constrained by foundational assumptions raised out of the conceptualisation of crisis.

The Treasury received the formal request from Bradley to extend the subject remit of the Imperial War Museum by letter on 23 September 1939. Memorandums between Treasury officials during its deliberations over the extension suggest no great exciting disagreement took place. For all the concern about the process, it would appear that there was general consensus over the benefit this extension would have for both the public and the Imperial War Museum, further highlighting the unwarrantedness of the concern expressed by the Board of Trustees. One Treasury official, for example, reflected that 'I think it must be admitted from all points of view that having set up the record of the Great War [...] it would be most desirable to continue with a similar record of the present war'.¹⁵² Another mused how 'it is probably right to assume that future generations will be at least as interested in records of the present war as of the last war'.¹⁵³ And a third official even predicted the outcome to this deep-revolutionary crisis-conducive situation had the requested permission not been granted: 'Future generations will probably be as interested in this war as in the last war and would not attend in large numbers a Museum whose exhibits were

¹⁵¹ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUS/034, typed letter, Bradley to Redman, 10 July 1939, pp. 1-2.

¹⁵² TNA, T 162/742/3, handwritten memorandum, by an unidentifiable individual, 30 September 1939, p. 2.

¹⁵³ TNA, T 162/742/3, handwritten memorandum, by an unidentifiable individual, 4 October 1939.

limited to the last war'.¹⁵⁴ Consequently, on 19 October 1939, a document conveying permission was issued by the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, including Neville Chamberlain, the Prime Minister.¹⁵⁵ Bradley duly presented this permission to the Trustees at the board meeting of 7 December 1939, where they reviewed it. With questions over its legitimacy now addressed, the Board authorised Bradley to begin organising the collection.¹⁵⁶ In doing so, the first part of the preventative strategy to address this crisis-conducive situation, seeking the requisite permission to reinvent, was concluded. The second part, executing the reinvention, had begun and is explored over the next two chapters.

8.4 Challenging the Established Narrative about Leslie Bradley

This chapter challenges an established narrative about Bradley built up over the past 25 years. While some more recent research has made welcome scholarly interventions in the prevailing discourse surrounding him at the Imperial War Museum (see, for example, Aulich and Hewitt 2007; Cundy 2015a; Green 2015), much which remains understood about the man continues to be predicated on sloppy, less well informed or self-serving, biased stories occupying the realms of myth and legend rather than accurate biography.

One quick example concerns Bradley's service record. Through referencing his *Times* obituary (anon 1968), historian David Reynolds (2013: p. 244), in a monograph entitled *The Long Shadow: The Great War and the Twentieth Century* about the impact of the First World War on the twentieth century, states an assumption that Bradley was 'wounded at Ypres'. This is verifiably incorrect, however. While the obituary does indeed disclose the fact

¹⁵⁴ TNA, T 162/742/3, handwritten memorandum, by an unidentifiable individual, 9 October 1939.

¹⁵⁵ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUS/033, typed letter, Douglas to The Duke of Gloucester, Lords of the Treasury, Trustees of the Imperial War Museum and Bradley, 19 October 1939.

¹⁵⁶ IWM, MA, EN1/1/COB/049/4, typed draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 7 December 1939, pp. 1-2.

that Bradley was ‘invalided from the Ypres Salient’ (anon 1968), his service record shows the evacuation actually took place because he developed ‘chronic infective condition of the mucus membrane of the large intestine’ – in current medical parlance, inflammatory bowel disease, typically comprising either Crohn’s disease or Ulcerative Colitis (see Langmead and Irving 2008) – rendering him ‘unfit for further military service’.¹⁵⁷ But such comments represent the least problematic inaccuracies about Bradley. Arguably the most problematic, nay personally damaging, which have gone on to influence the way the Imperial War Museum and IWM today has viewed its history (see, for example, Charman 2008 and Taylor 2009), originate from his successor, Noble Frankland. This lengthier example concerns Bradley’s approach towards the museum’s direction and place in society as the Second World War loomed.

In 1994, while reviewing Gaynor Kavanagh’s (1994) monograph *Museums and the First World War: A Social History*, Frankland (1995: p. 127) lambasted Bradley’s legacy while addressing the Imperial War Museum:

The point she misses is that when the original object of helping to sustain morale in the war expired with the advent of peace, the new idea which took its place was that this museum would record and remind of a catastrophe which surely could never happen again. When, within a shockingly short time, it did, the original Imperial War Museum seemed to lose its mission. One of its most devoted servants, my immediate predecessor as Director, Mr L. R. Bradley, was quietly planning an institutional demise, which would be slow and dignified and would approximately coincide with his own.

¹⁵⁷ TNA, WO 339/54103, printed form completed by hand, ‘Proceedings of A Medical Board’, 25 August 1916.

Two years later, during his memoir *History at War*, he pressed home this attack by reiterating the above accusation and buttressing it with another, as follows:

Mr Bradley continued to see the Imperial War Museum through the eyes of its original beholders and those who founded it. [...] The coming of the Second World War shattered this illusion, as it had done for the Royal Institute of International Affairs. In that context, it was not wholly illogical for Mr Bradley to believe that the best course was to arrange for a gradual and dignified decline towards extinction for the museum which history had turned on its head. It did not occur to him that there was an alternative, or if it did, it was not one which he wished to embrace. He gave the impression of hoping, as he approached the grave, that the museum, which he had served for so long, would do the same.

(Frankland 1998: p. 164)

In writing this, Frankland included broad statements about Bradley's character, particularly his historical subject interests and personal agenda for the museum:

His empathy was almost wholly with the First World War [...]. To him, the Second World War was a nuisance which deposited masses of material in the Museum, squeezing its already restricted space and disrupting such order as its exhibitions had earlier had.

(*Ibid.*: pp. 163-164)

This portrayal of Bradley is visibly at odds with the preceding and proceeding picture created from documentary evidence produced by and about Bradley over the Second World War. The information gleaned from material discovered in the archives consulted for the present study belies Frankland's pointed criticisms.

It may be the case that Bradley did eventually lose sight of the Imperial War Museum during his final years as Director-General. This possibility is not

disputed here. A note written in 1960 certainly conveys that the Chair of the Board of Trustees at the time had started perceiving Bradley's performance as 'beginning to slow up'.¹⁵⁸ By this time, he had not long turned 67. What is disputed, however, are Frankland's comments about Bradley's tenure during the Second World War era. As Bradley himself demonstrates through his own writings over the period, he had nurtured the fundamental requirements for updating the museum's *raison d'être* and rationale as introduced in chapter four (see subsection 4.6.2): dissatisfaction with the *status quo*, recognition of an alternative desired state and even some awareness of the necessary practical steps to obtain that state, the overall process of which must be worth more than the cost of the change (Beckhard 1975: p. 45). Indeed, Bradley was dissatisfied by the existing paradigm. He could clearly see an alternative path before the Imperial War Museum which deviated from its original mission. Moreover, Bradley was eager to direct the institution down this path and perceived that to do otherwise would be to ensure the museum's closure. Consequently, far from endangering the Imperial War Museum, at the onset of the Second World War he took action which evaded the crisis-conducive situation before it could strike.

8.5 Chapter Conclusion

The Second World War was the catalyst for an institutional transformation of the Imperial War Museum. From 1917 until 1939, the Imperial War Museum had embodied a museum on the 'war to end all war', as the First World War was then understood. When the Second World War struck, this created a crisis-conducive situation which cast the cultural relevancy of the museum into doubt. It was decided therefore that the institution needed to undergo wholesale change, framed by this thesis as reinvention. The process involved transforming from a museum on the 'war to end all war' to a museum on the two world wars, in doing so creating something new from something which already existed. The

¹⁵⁸ TNA, T 218/207, typed memo, 'Note for the Record', by Loughnane.

Director-General, Bradley, was the key driving force behind this reinvention. Contrary to prevailing stories surrounding his views on the scope and function of the Imperial War Museum, he perceived a credible future that involved an extended subject remit representing stories and displaying material from the new world war. Bradley therefore raised the matter with the relevant authorities and worked with them towards securing the necessary permission for the project.

This first stage in the approach towards preventing the anticipated threat of post-war cultural irrelevancy at the Imperial War Museum discussed over the current chapter emphasises the importance that considerations surrounding legitimacy has for successful crisis management, indeed all organisational matters. Although museums must ensure their crisis management activities and performance while managing a crisis situation has legitimacy as discussed in chapter seven (see subsection 7.4.3), they must also ensure the overarching strategy is legitimate. When museums experience some crisis-conducive situation therefore, the strategy conceived towards their resolution should be consistent with society's prevailing socio-political requirements and regulations.

Through his sensing of the crisis-conducive situation facing the Imperial War Museum and indulgence of the concerns of Board of Trustees about the appropriateness of the reinvention, Bradley demonstrates an acute awareness of and respect for the legitimacy requirements of the institution when responding to the anticipated threat of post-war cultural irrelevancy. Yet, at the same time, he also demonstrates significant concern and frustration over the delays which the ensuing process towards ensuring the reinvention's legitimacy, demanded by the Trustees, had on the strategy. As this chapter also shows therefore, delays can cause serious problems for museums undergoing crisis management. They may prevent them from carrying out necessary activities in a timely manner or in a limited timeframe, causing bottlenecks at critical points during the process, or blocking activities from being carried out completely when required. Accordingly, it is contended that any uncertainty over the legitimacy requirements of a museum should be settled as part of routine crisis management

planning ahead of some crisis situation. Doing so may help to avoid potential delays which researching this information in the moment might otherwise cause.

Having secured permission for the reinvention of the Imperial War Museum, the second stage in preventing the anticipated threat posed by post-war cultural irrelevancy was to deliver it. This undertaking involved modifying the collection through accessioning material acquired from the new world war and deaccessioning material which would unlikely ever be displayed. Before the necessary work could be accomplished, however, the museum needed to establish the precise nature of its proposed reinvention. Specifically, it needed to establish what the new, updated subject remit might comprise, and ensure the remit did not overlap with any collecting initiatives by other relevant museums. This activity is framed herein as conceptual reinvention. It comprises the subject of the next chapter, which continues on the current exploration of the response of the museum to the anticipated threat of post-war cultural irrelevancy.

Chapter 9 Planning the Reconception, 1939-1941: The Conceptual Reinvention of the Imperial War Museum

9.1 Chapter Introduction

Over chapter eight, I proposed a second novel crisis type. Termed the deep-revolutionary crisis, it manifests when an impacted museum becomes misaligned with the social system, such as by no longer meeting the wants, needs and interest of society. The *deep* descriptor in the name refers to the understanding that museums are being impacted metaphysically, underneath their physical structure. An appropriate strategy for dealing with deep-revolutionary crisis therefore involves realignment with the social system. It requires the impacted museum to undergo wholesale change that not only changes its physical manifestation, but also its philosophical underpinnings, hence the *revolutionary* descriptor. Chapter eight commenced an argument that the Imperial War Museum was threatened by a deep-revolutionary crisis-conducive situation over the Second World War era. This is because following the conflict's onset, continuing to maintain a *raison d'être* that focused purely on the previous world war had become unsustainable. Moreover, its rationale of representing the previous war as the 'war to end all war' was no longer tenable.

Following on from chapter eight, this thesis advances the critical and historical narrative concerning the work by the Imperial War Museum to mitigate the crisis-conducive situation it encountered from the threatened post-war cultural irrelevancy. Whereas chapter eight explored how the museum detected the signals and sensed the significance of this situation and conceived the necessary resolution and mitigating strategy, over the next two chapters I explore processes underlying the strategy. Through doing so, these chapters argue that museums facing deep-revolutionary crisis must reinvent themselves: reinvention, as discussed in chapter four (see subsection 4.6.1), being concerned with creating something new from something which already exists. On an individual level, the current chapter considers the process that reconceived the

Imperial War Museum. Put another way, it considers the work, tensions and interventions which transpired to establish the reinvention's precise nature. As such I contend that the reinvention of a museum first involves conceptualising precisely what the reinvented museum will look like and that this conception can arise from both internal and external forces. Through undertaking the above, the chapter contributes towards addressing aim three, objective three; aim five, objective three; and aim six, objectives two and three of this study.

The nature of the reinvention which the Imperial War Museum undertook during the Second World War era stemmed in part from rivalry it developed with another national museum at the time. Over 1917-1934, the institution held a practical monopoly on most material pertaining to the First World War. Only two other institutions possessed a remit with overlap: the Science Museum, and Royal United Service Institute Museum. Yet the extent that these institutions actually overlapped was exceedingly limited. The Science Museum did not concern itself 'with war relics as such except when these relics happen to illustrate some outstanding technological advance or invention'.¹⁵⁹ And while the Royal United Service Institute Museum did 'concentrate as far as possible on small trophies or mementoes of famous actions or events [...] [involving] His Majesty's Armed Forces (including Dominion, Indian and Colonial Forces)',¹⁶⁰ this took place 'on a comparatively small scale',¹⁶¹ with 'a cordial collaboration [existing] between the Institution and the Imperial War Museum'.¹⁶² The many regimental museums founded before and after the First World War were also mostly interested in subjects and events concerning their relevant regiment (Kavanagh 1994: p. 157). During 1934, however, a new museum came into

¹⁵⁹ TNA, EB 5/4, typed memorandum, 'Disposal of War Relics: Summary Note on the Present Position', October 1940, p. 1.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ TNA, EB 2/1, typed transcript, 'Note of Interview with Mr. L.R. Bradley, Director of the Imperial War Museum', p. 2.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

existence out of the nationwide museum investment programme over the 1930s that significantly overlapped with the Imperial War Museum on matters pertaining to war at sea (Pearson 2017: p. 32). This was the National Maritime Museum, concerned with the ‘preservation and exhibition of objects connected with the Naval and Mercantile Marine Services, harbours and ports, voyages of exploration and discovery etc. and portraits etc. connected therewith’.¹⁶³ With the onset of the Second World War, the Imperial War Museum found itself competing with the National Maritime Museum for exhibits, requiring an understanding about how the Imperial War Museum would represent the Second World War while setting it apart from the National Maritime Museum.

To present the reinvention that the Imperial War Museum underwent during the Second World War era, I articulate reinvention over the following two chapters as a two-stage process. Drawing on ideas by reinvention theorist Willie Pietersen (2002), reinvention, as I conceive herein, begins with the work of delineating what the transforming museum’s desired paradigm should look like. This is then followed with the work to realise the new paradigm through bringing the museum’s various organisational elements into alignment. Accordingly, the current chapter considers what I frame here as *conceptual reinvention*, which involves establishing the new *raison d’être* and rationale of the museum. As in chapters seven and eight, the chapter’s framing is informed by Christine M. Pearson and Ian I. Mitroff’s (1993) general five-stage framework for crisis management, specifically the second ‘prevention’ stage.

This chapter explores the above over three substantive sections. The first section (9.2) addresses conceptual reinvention in abstract. It elucidates the concept, and the associated issues, ideas and activities. The second, third and fourth substantive sections (9.3, 9.4 and 9.5) then consider the specific conceptual reinvention which the Imperial War Museum underwent as a response to the crisis-conducive situation that was faced from the perceived

¹⁶³ IWM, MA, EN1/1/MUSG/013, typed letter, Wardley to Bradley, 6 March 1934.

threat of post-war cultural irrelevancy. They explore the process that took place, explore the outcome and, in particular, consider the unsolicited input by the National Maritime Museum, which partly influenced the outcome.

9.2 Conceptual Reinvention

Reinvention is the ultimate response to the risk, threat or perception of becoming completely irrelevant in the social system. It concerns not just organisational practices, but also their purpose. In the museum context, reinvention transcends the physical elements where these exist to effect metaphysical aspects as well, including a museum's *mission*, *values* and *vision*. These concepts are three notions which guide museum purpose, principles and outlook. The mission drives the museum forward. It comprises a statement or understanding that conveys or embodies a museum's *raison d'être*, rationale and aims and objectives. The mission is informed by a museum's values. Values are the issues and ideas which inspire the museum to action. And the vision is a desired outcome of a museum's work: a forward projection, taking into account museum mission, values and the prevailing social system (Fleming 2015: p. 3). As Gail Anderson (2012: p. 2) puts it: 'Reinventing the museum is not just adding a program, reinstalling a gallery, or increasing financial reserves – it is a systemic shift in attitude, purpose, alignment, and execution'. Accordingly, the reinvention of museums concerns more than just the mere retooling of what museums do. It also involves the redefinition of what museums are and are for.

Conceptual reinvention of museums typically begins at the relevant institution as a response to dissatisfaction with the *status quo* through concerns about encroaching irrelevancy (Beckhard 1975: p. 45). It necessitates critical organisational self-examination: asking and answering hard questions about what the museum is, is for and does. In doing so, the transforming museum can establish what the desired state actually is (*ibid.*). This process has become known as a situational analysis, which embodies a critical reflection towards analysing all the internal and external factors to a museum (Law 2009).

Pietersen (2002: p. 71) thematises the various issues, ideas and activities which comprise this opening stage of the reinvention process as *learning*. In the museological context, Gary Edson and David Dean (1994: pp. 27-28) propose various introspective questions to support this work. These include questions geared towards understanding issues including the unique role of the relevant museum, who its constituents are, what they and the wider community needs, and the relationship between the museum and them, etcetera. Through making assessments and revealing the disparities between their various organisational contexts and the relevant societal values which they must negotiate and factor into operations, museums can determine the destination for their reinvention: the organisation they must undergo a reinvention process to become.

Following situational analysis, conceptual reinvention requires a period wherein the precise nature of the desired reinvention process is clarified. Pietersen (2002: pp. 105-126) thematises the issues, ideas and activities comprising this work as *focusing*. Without an understanding of what the precise aims and objectives comprising some reinvention process is, reinvention cannot take place safely or effectively. It risks occurring without clear direction, and in doing so may become a drain on resources with nothing helpful to show for the expenditure (*ibid.*: pp. 106-107). As with any organisation, museum user expectations and requirements lie at the heart of museum reinvention. Drawing on the information derived from a situational analysis, museums must, where practicable, implement an offer that delivers what users seek from museums (Falk 2012: pp. 325-327). The focussing of reinvention may otherwise end up delivering something which is neither wanted nor needed. Visitor research has an important part to play in that process. Depending on the methodology deployed, it can help ascertain what motivates attendance at museums when other recreational activities vie for attention. This possibility makes visitor research an essential task in focusing reinvention (Komatsuka 2007: p. 375).

Another important consideration to make when focussing reinvention is the museum's service and competition. All organisations, whatever their *raison*

d'être and rationale, need to fill some specific societal need. This requirement is met through offering what Pietersen (2002: pp. 115-117) calls a 'winning proposition'. In the commercial context, winning propositions comprise some public offer that retains or enhances an organisation's unique selling point, enabling them to stand out from their competitors – at the expense of competitors if necessary. Much the same thinking can be applied against museums, which also need a unique selling point for emphasis (McLean 1997: p. 117). The difference with the museum sector, however, is that as public service organisations with limited resources, museums should ideally work together rather than against each other. Consequently, unlike commercial organisations, they should ideally consider the interests of other existing or potentially comparative museums when undertaking strategic planning, as encouraged by articles 3.9 and 3.10 of the International Council of Museums (2018) *Code of Ethics for Museums*. To do otherwise potentiates what has become known in museum discourse as *duplication of effort*. This phenomenon occurs when two or more opposing museums hold the same mission, values and vision or pursue similar aims and objectives with limited resources (Goode 1994: p. 46; Hatton 1994: p. 152; Madison 1994: p. 267; Kenyon 1995: pp. 122-123). As such, while a winning proposition is important for museum reinvention, a museum reinvention which does not take into account the *raison d'être* and rationale of other museums risks being detrimental to museum services (Goode 1994: p. 46; Kenyon 1995: pp. 122-123).

9.3 Mitigating the Crisis of Irrelevancy, 1939-1940

9.3.1 *Jostling for collections*

Before exploring the conceptual reinvention of the Imperial War Museum and the extent that the National Maritime Museum influenced the outcome, it is important to understand how this situation arose. During the Second World War, both the Imperial War Museum and the National Maritime Museum found themselves competing for naval exhibits. The rivalry began on 10 September

1939 when the Director-General of the Imperial War Museum, Leslie Bradley, wrote to the Admiralty while seeking support for the institution's extension, stating: 'While I have received no instructions for an extension of the museum [...], it seems inconceivable that no such effort should be made'.¹⁶⁴ In staking out the institution's claim, he asserted that 'all members of the staff will, if given the opportunity, spare no effort to ensure that the work and efforts of the Royal Navy are adequately recorded'.¹⁶⁵ The Royal United Service Institute Museum also made a similar claim during October 1939.¹⁶⁶ These requests caught the National Maritime Museum off guard. Its Trustees had not previously felt the need to stake a claim. Rather, having governed under the conception that the National Maritime Museum 'was established by Act of Parliament in order to portray the deeds of the Navy and the Merchant and Fishing Fleets throughout our history',¹⁶⁷ they thought their institution would have first refusal for objects.

On learning of the applications for naval material that had been made by the Imperial War Museum and the Royal United Service Institute Museum, the Director of the National Maritime Museum, Sir Geoffrey Callender, wrote an urgent letter to the Admiralty. He stated that his Trustees would

view with dismay any counter proposals which denied to them the power of linking up the history of the Royal Navy in our own time with the history of the Royal Navy in the days of Drake, Blake and Nelson.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ TNA, EB 3/19, typed letter, Bradley to First Lord of the Admiralty, 10 September 1939, p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁶⁶ TNA, EB 3/19, typed letter, anon. to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 31 October 1939.

¹⁶⁷ TNA, EB 5/4, typed letter, Callender to Beresford, 30 April 1940, p. 1.

¹⁶⁸ TNA, EB 3/19, typed letter, Callender to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 13 December 1939, p. 1.

Callender makes a convincing argument in this letter for why naval material should be deposited at the National Maritime Museum. As he explained,

although the Act [...] inaugurating the Imperial War Museum preceded the National Maritime Museum Act by fourteen years, the National Maritime Museum Act Section 3 sub-section (a) [stating ‘which at the time of the constitution of the Board form part of the Naval Museum of the Royal Naval College’] recognised the Royal Naval Museum [...] which traces its origin back [...] prior to 1832. In transferring [...] the contents of the Royal Naval Museum, the Act of 1934 demonstrated [...] the lines on which the National Maritime Museum should be conducted.¹⁶⁹

Interestingly, despite making this convincing case, it seems Callender still felt very insecure about the position of the National Maritime Museum, particularly as regards the Imperial War Museum. Perhaps he felt embarrassed at potentially being seen to have been outmanoeuvred. Or maybe he thought that Bradley had encroached too much on his turf. Whatever the reason, Callender subsequently followed up a month later with another letter seeking to aggressively undermine the claim of the Imperial War Museum. This took place mainly by incorrectly asserting, as demonstrated during chapter eight, that any extension of the subject remit of the Imperial War Museum would require being ‘brought before Parliament’, and that because ‘the War Museum is “Imperial” in character, [...] any amendment to the [Imperial War Museum] Act of 1920 will [also need to] be brought to the notice of other Museums, not only in this country, but in the Dominions and Colonies’.¹⁷⁰ He did however buttress these assertions by adding quite correctly that ‘The Imperial War Museum is already so congested that an

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ TNA, 3/19, typed letter, Callender to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 23 January 1940, pp. 1-2.

extension of its range would necessitate a considerable reduction of the 1914-1918 exhibits, unless an ambitious building scheme were found practicable',¹⁷¹ an issue for the institution that is considered during chapter ten.

The position and tone that Callender took on this matter contrasted with Bradley's. Seemingly at no point did Bradley dismiss the claim of the National Maritime Museum. Rather, he made the observation that 'it would overbalance that Museum if it attempted to deal with the Naval Relics of this war on the same scale as the Imperial War Museum'.¹⁷² This is because, before the Second World War, the National Maritime Museum had a subject remit which concerned over one hundred years of British maritime history, compared with the mere four years of war world war which the Imperial War Museum focused on. Callender's conduct over the issue goes some way to explaining, if not justifying, an extremely hard character reference made of him by the Director of the Science Museum, Ernest Mackintosh, himself a Trustee of the Imperial War Museum. Writing to Bradley around this time, Mackintosh described Callender as 'a perfect Nazi – shifty, grasping, opportunist, and unscrupulous [...]. He alters the scope and prerogative of the [...] [National Maritime Museum] to suit his whim or covetousness'.¹⁷³ To be clear, Mackintosh's use of the term *Nazi* here was unlikely an accusation regarding Callender's political ideology. As Nigel Rees (2011: p. 136) clarifies, during the Second World War, Nazi became the hate word in the United Kingdom: 'as though it related to nasty'.

Through the multiple opposing requests for naval exhibits, the Treasury, in concert with the Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry, decided that the most appropriate action for dealing with this situation was to consider the matter holistically. In other words, decisions on their allocation would be linked up

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁷² TNA, EB 2/1, typed transcript, 'Note of Interview with Mr. L.R. Bradley, Director of the Imperial War Museum', p. 1.

¹⁷³ IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/049, hand-written letter, Mackintosh to Bradley, 17 January 1940, p. 1.

with considerations regarding ground- and aerial-related material as well. Such was the complexity of and specialist knowledge required for this task that the Treasury passed its undertaking over to the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries. It requested that the Standing Commission ‘consider and report upon the most appropriate allocation of relics of the present war between the institutions concerned’.¹⁷⁴ These were the Imperial War Museum, National Maritime Museum, Science Museum and the Royal United Service Institute Museum. The potential acquisitions which would be earmarked by the service departments for collection after the war could then be distributed centrally as per the report’s recommendations.¹⁷⁵ This idea seemingly conciliated Callender, who on receiving the news responded by stating ‘I am sure that all members of the Board will welcome the decision to transfer responsibility in this matter’.¹⁷⁶ Consequently, the Standing Commission created a subcommittee to deliberate over the question of the allocation of material amongst these institutions.¹⁷⁷

9.3.2 The Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries material allocation subcommittee

Throughout 1940-1941, evidence from the Imperial War Museum, National Maritime Museum, Science Museum and the Royal United Service Institute Museum, alongside government departments and the War Artists Advisory Committee – a wartime body tasked with commissioning and disseminating war art amongst the country’s national and local institutions (Foss 2007) – was submitted to the Standing Commission. Submissions comprised letters,

¹⁷⁴ TNA, EB 3/19, typed letter, Beresford to the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, 23 April 1940, p. 1.

¹⁷⁵ TNA, EB 2/2, typed report with handwritten amendments representing the final draft, ‘Sub-Committee on the Allocation of Relics of the Present War’, p. 2.

¹⁷⁶ TNA, 3/19, typed letter, Callender to Beresford, 24 April 1940.

¹⁷⁷ TNA, EB 5/4, typed memorandum, ‘Disposal of War Relics: Summary Note on the Present Position’, p. 1.

memoranda and oral testimony, establishing the war related collecting requirements, or views on them, of the various aforementioned organisations. The evidence was then deliberated over by what shall be termed here as the Standing Commission's *material allocation subcommittee*, which seemingly never received an official name.¹⁷⁸ This whole process resulted in a report delivered on 14 August 1941 providing recommendations for the distribution of army, navy and air force related material amongst these four museums.¹⁷⁹

Claims from the Science Museum and the Royal United Service Institute Museum were quickly and easily dealt with by the material allocation subcommittee. The Science Museum possessed no interest in conflict *per se*. It therefore was only concerned with acquiring objects of significant scientific interest.¹⁸⁰ Accordingly, the report accepted the institution's claim for material such as 'aircraft models and components, engines, scientific instruments, wireless apparatus, vehicles, etc. etc. [...] which it would have been interested [in] had the same scientific and technical developments occurred in the absence of war'.¹⁸¹ The Royal United Service Institute Museum, by contrast, while obviously holding interest in obtaining exhibits derived from war and armed conflict involving the United Kingdom and the British Empire, had somewhat restricted scope and space. As such, it only sought 'small trophies or mementoes of famous actions [...] and [significant] personal relics'.¹⁸² Accordingly, the material allocation subcommittee recommended that: 'We see no objection to the Institution including [...] [these] in its collections on the same lines as those

¹⁷⁸ TNA, EB 2/2, typed report with handwritten amendments representing the final draft, 'Sub-Committee on the Allocation of Relics of the Present War: Report', p. 1.

¹⁷⁹ TNA, EB 2/2, typed meeting minutes, Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries, 14 August 1941, p. 3.

¹⁸⁰ TNA, EB 2/2, typed report with handwritten amendments representing the final draft, 'Sub-Committee on the Allocation of Relics of the Present War: Report', p. 5.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

of previous wars'.¹⁸³ The Imperial War Museum and National Maritime Museum, by contrast, proved a different and wholly more difficult matter. Questions over the disposal of the navel material between these museums presented awkward issues occupying the subcommittee's time. Moreover, the conclusions that the members drew had broad consequences for the Imperial War Museum – the focussing of its reinvention – which helped catalyse changes to the institution's identity and collecting policies that still reverberate today.

In making its case for receiving material from the service departments, the Imperial War Museum submitted three pieces of evidence to the material allocation subcommittee. Through these submissions, the institution demonstrates what Timothy Ambrose and Crispin Paine (2018: pp. 381-390) call a *forward plan*. Drawing on findings from situational analysis, they provide museums with the imagination and framework for improving organisational effectiveness and resolving any problems which might exist (Ambrose 1991). The first piece of evidence comprised a letter from the then Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Sir Bertram Cubitt. This summarised the Trustees' position on the scope maintained by the Imperial War Museum and the material it felt should be deposited there.¹⁸⁴ The second was an extended memorandum from Bradley. This explicated the issues and ideas conveyed in Cubitt's aforementioned letter, and established the museum's aims and objectives and its expectations.¹⁸⁵ And the third was oral testimony from an interview with Bradley conducted by the Standing Commission. This sought to clarify or further develop on points raised in the two previous sources.¹⁸⁶ The evidence

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ TNA, EB 5/4, typed letter, Cubitt to Beresford, 25 April 1940.

¹⁸⁵ TNA, EB 5/4, typed memorandum, 'The Case for Including in the Imperial War Museum Relics, Trophies, and Records of the Present War in All Its Aspects, at Sea, on Land, in the Air on the "Home Front", Together with Those of the War of 1914-1918'.

¹⁸⁶ TNA, EB 2/1, typed transcript, 'Note of Interview with Mr. L.R. Bradley, Director of the Imperial War Museum'.

included a list exemplifying the naval material that the Imperial War Museum sought, and copies of letters from the Treasury authorising the institution's extension and requesting that material be set aside for it by the various government departments.¹⁸⁷ This forward plan indicates that a process of self-reflective learning had been undertaken at the institution towards understanding the museum's *raison d'être* and rationale (Adams and Koke 2008; Pietersen 2002: p. 71). At the same time, it offers an insight into the museum's vision for, and hence focus of, the then proposed reinvention (Kotter 2007: p. 27; Pietersen 2002: pp. 105-126). In doing so, the plan helped develop the comprehension about the desired state which the museum sought (Beckhard 1975: p. 45).

Notwithstanding its newly sanctioned subject remit, the argument which the Imperial War Museum put forward predicated on the understanding that the institution was one of popular appeal in two general contexts: representational and demographic. The first context derived from the view that the institution had been established to commemorate the efforts made by every participating person from the United Kingdom and British Empire during the previous world war (Kavanagh 1994: p. 137; Malvern 2000: pp. 185-188). As Cubitt's letter informed the subcommittee, the Imperial War Museum existed 'to form a memorial and record of the effort and sacrifices of the empire in all aspects of the war'.¹⁸⁸ Bradley's memorandum therefore contended that the institution

must continue to have [represented] within its scope the work of the Royal Navy, Merchant Navy, Army, and Air Force, of the men and women of the Civil Defence, the munition workers, the women's services,

¹⁸⁷ TNA, EB 5/4, typed list, 'A Short List of Classes of Naval Material Required for the Imperial War Museum Based on the Contents of the Present Naval Galleries and the Reference Departments'.

¹⁸⁸ TNA, EB 5/4, typed letter, Cubitt to Beresford, 25 April 1940, p. 1.

and the Dominions, and to deal with the effects of the war on the ordinary civilian, and all its endless repercussions.¹⁸⁹

The second demographic context derived from the aforementioned representational context. By being ostensibly a museum that represented the work of everybody who had participated in war, the Imperial War Museum aimed its representation, so the memorandum claimed, at ‘the “popular” visitor, rather than the technical, as distinguished from the general, student’.¹⁹⁰ Put more simply, the institution’s content was focussed on catering for the everyday person rather than the specialist. Jennifer Wellington (2017: p. 242) demonstrates this framing to have been a longstanding trait of the institution, aligned with its deliberate, founding popular appeal discussed in chapter five (see subsection 5.2.3). When the general public began visiting after the opening ceremony, curators noted how many people expressed ‘surprise’ that mundane and everyday objects would be considered ‘worthy of preservation’. As Alys Cundy (2017a: p 406) explains, this curatorial decision was deliberate: ‘The IWM’s founders sought to differentiate themselves from [...] more restricted collections by presenting the museum as a place where those who had experienced the war in any capacity could easily visit and see themselves represented’. In developing the point during his oral testimony towards a discussion on whether the Imperial War Museum acquired scientifically-related collection items, Bradley concurred with an assertion by the Standing Commission member Sir Albert Steward that the Imperial War Museum was

¹⁸⁹ TNA, EB 5/4, typed memorandum, ‘The Case for Including in the Imperial War Museum Relics, Trophies, and Records of the Present War in All Its Aspects, at Sea, on Land, in the Air on the “Home Front”, Together with Those of the War of 1914-1918’, p. 3 of the document (p. 5 of the overall submission).

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

not interested in scientific instruments as such, but we are interested in a scientific instrument which, through its wide application and importance in the war, became familiar by name to the public, or in any scientific instrument which became famous through its connection with a particular person or a particular event.¹⁹¹

The technical qualities of the displays had previously been emphasised in publicity literature to help popularise the museum (Cundy 2017c: pp. 265-266).

Through these submissions, the Imperial War Museum appealed to the material allocation subcommittee for exhibits prevalent in societal consciousness and representative of both the civilian and military war effort. They show the reinvention was geared towards addressing the Second World War through a *raison d'être* and rationale which broadly cohered with the institution's founding ideals: mass commemoration and representation, although now minus the conceit that the previous world war had been the 'war to end all war'. The left hand column in Table 2, which lists the naval *matériel* that the Imperial War Museum sought, illustrates this. Desired items included actual equipment, or models thereof; visual representations of offensive and defensive tactics and strategies; uniforms; ephemera; publications and medals – anything which helped roundly narrate the imperial war effort at sea. As Bradley's memorandum summarises, the museum wished to receive a 'balanced selection so that all aspects of the war effort of the Empire may be fully represented in the only Museum that can give a worthy picture of the whole'.¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ TNA, EB 2/1, typed transcript, 'Note of Interview with Mr. L. R. Bradley, Director of the Imperial War Museum', p. 1.

¹⁹² TNA, EB 5/4, typed memorandum, 'The Case for Including in the Imperial War Museum Relics, Trophies, and Records of the Present War in All Its Aspects, at Sea, on Land, in the Air on the "Home Front", Together with Those of the War of 1914-1918', p. 5 of the document (p. 7 of the overall submission).

The National Maritime Museum broadly supported the case of the Imperial War Museum in its own evidence submitted to the material allocation subcommittee. At Callender's interview, he stated that 'the main object of the Imperial War Museum seemed to be to provide for the casual study of popular or spectacular war exhibits, many of which were connected with great events'.¹⁹³ The essential ideas behind the museum's argument therefore can be seen to of held wider support. Yet a comment made in Callender's aforementioned oral testimony would influence the debate around its remit. This was use of the word *spectacular* in describing the exhibits he felt the Imperial War Museum should be collecting versus those collected by the National Maritime Museum.

Spectacular derives from the word *spectacle*. Charity M. Counts (2009: p. 274) defines the word as 'an event or experience that one simply cannot help but look at, whether in wonderment, curiosity, shock or awe'. In line with this understanding, various cultural theorists, such as Guy Debord (1977), Anne McClintock (1995: pp. 56-61); Tony Bennett (1995: 63-69) and Nick Prior (2006: p. 514), have used 'spectacle' during discussions on the appropriation of imagery to convey state, colonial, technical and commercial power. In the exhibition, therefore, spectacular material could include pictures, objects big and small and even intangible constructs such as ideas, concepts and cultures.

There are two likely references which Callender could have been making when he framed the collection of the Imperial War Museum as spectacular. The first concerns its stirring qualities. Many composite objects were large items of *matériel* such as military vehicles, aircraft, boats and ships or pieces derived thereof, or grand memorial paintings such as John Singer Sargent's *Gassed*, Paul Nash's *The Menin Road* and Percy Wyndham Lewis's *A Battery Shelled*, which can induce shock and awe in visitors at the power they enable the state to wield, or the horrors this power can unleash when wielded. The second concerns a

¹⁹³ TNA, EB 5/4, typed memorandum, 'Disposal of War Relics: Summary Note on the Present Position', p. 2.

perception that its collection had little high cultural-historical value. After all, the Imperial War Museum was revolutionary in that the institution sought popular appeal by presenting, interpreting and preserving ordinary objects (Cundy 2017a: p. 406). He could also have been referring to both. In any case, his emphasis was on the influence they had amongst visitors.

Callender's motive for invoking the phrase 'spectacular war exhibits' remains uncertain. While both possible reasons proposed above are appropriate to describe many items from the collection of the Imperial War Museum both thitherto and thenceforth, at no point does Cubitt's letter, Bradley's oral testimony, or the memorandum describe any of the institution's existing or desired exhibits as possessing anything like spectacular attributes. Indeed, in his study on the museum's object collection and display rationales throughout 1917-1939, IWM curator Paul Cornish (2004) shows that spectacularness, as a consciously defined concept, had little if any formal sway over decision making there regarding such work or issues before the Second World War commenced. Obviously, this does not mean that before 1939 the institution tried to avoid collecting objects with arguably spectacular attributes. In another study on the museum's historical collecting practices, Cornish (2012) shows it clearly did so by collecting large, imposing items. The reason for their collection however was not down to any spectacular attributes the objects may have had. Rather, the reason was for their provenance, the stories they helped convey (Cornish 2004: p. 37). Similar findings are presented in research by Cundy (2015b; 2017c).

It is conjectured that the motive behind Callender's intervention arose because he thought this dimension would help contrast the institution's collecting remit with his own. He otherwise may have conceived some crisis-conducive situation impacting the National Maritime Museum. Indeed, it is possible that Callender, justifiably or otherwise, perceived a duplication of effort discussed above arising between the Imperial War Museum and the National Maritime Museum, with all the ramifications this entailed for the legitimacy of the latter (Goode 1994: p. 46; Kenyon 1995: pp. 122-123). After all, judging

from the Standing Commission's interim report on the various remits and claims, there clearly existed crossover between both: the Imperial War Museum being similarly interested in 'portraits, contemporary representations of big battles; ship models of chief ships; British Naval uniforms; naval ensigns; naval instruments; personal relics of very distinguished naval men [...]; library manuscripts and books, including Admiralty manuscripts up to the last war' which could convey stories through their province.¹⁹⁴ The spectacular, however, was something the National Maritime Museum 'would often not be interested in'.¹⁹⁵ It is possible, therefore, that Callender thought by framing the collection of the Imperial War Museum as comprising a collection of crowd pleasers rather than supposedly serious historical items, he could ensure sufficient divergence between the two to avert duplication of effort over their public offer and, moreover, that the cream of what was available would end up at the National Maritime Museum. Supporting this idea, Callender also volunteered a list detailing what he thought would be the most appropriate items for the Imperial War Museum.¹⁹⁶ Presented down the right hand column of Table 2, while demonstrating the same broad remit as that forwarded by Bradley, the emphasis was on so-called spectacular objects such as weapon delivery systems, ordinance and armour. Its implication is that high cultural-historical items should instead go to the National Maritime Museum.

The significance of Callender's intervention is the effect that it had on the institution's conceptual reinvention, and in turn impact on the museum's work after the Second World War. The chapter now explores this post-war effect before going on to explore how his framing of the Imperial War Museum catalysed the effect by influencing the material allocation subcommittee.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ TNA, EB 5/4, typed list, 'Categories Suitable for the Imperial War Museum'.

Table 2 – Two lists of naval material recommended for the Imperial War Museum. The example on the left was submitted by Bradley of the Imperial War Museum.¹⁹⁷ The example on the right was submitted by Callender of the National Maritime Museum.¹⁹⁸

<p>Short List of Naval Material Required For the Imperial War Museum Based on the Contents of the Present Naval Galleries and the Reference Departments</p>	<p>Categories Suitable for the Imperial War Museum</p>
<p>Photographs of ships of the period.</p>	<p>Artillery; except in the form of models, designs, and measured drawings.</p>
<p>Classified list of H.M. Ships at outbreak and end of hostilities: statistics of enlistments, casualties, awards, etc.</p>	<p>Lethal weapons other than cannon; except in the form of models, designs and measured drawings.</p>
<p>Builders models of famous ships, including Fleet Auxiliaries.</p>	<p>Torpedoes, Contact Mines, Magnetic Mines.</p>
<p>Relics and actions of famous ships.</p>	<p>Depth-Charges</p>
<p>Models illustrating actions and methods of attack and defence.</p>	<p>Actual Guns preserved as trophies of personal heroism, e.g. guns served by Jack Cornwell, V.C. at Jutland; or last in action in H.M.S. Hardy at Narvik.</p>
<p>Historic ordinance and special weapons and means of defence evolved during the war.</p>	<p>18” shells and other projectiles.</p>

¹⁹⁷ TNA, EB 5/4, typed list, ‘A Short List of Classes of Naval Material Required for the Imperial War Museum Based on the Contents of the Present Naval Galleries and the Reference Departments’.

¹⁹⁸ TNA, EB 5/4, typed list, ‘Categories Suitable for the Imperial War Museum’.

<p>Naval shells, fuses, and cartridges.</p> <p>Naval uniforms, equipment, and badges of rank and proficiency (including Royal Marines and Fleet Air Arm).</p> <p>Ships' badges.</p> <p>Mine warfare, including British and German mines, minelaying and minesweeping.</p> <p>Submarine warfare, including depth charge, asdig, hydrophone, torpedo, and defensive arming of merchant ships.</p> <p>Convoy.</p> <p>Anti-aircraft defence.</p> <p>Merchant Navy; photographs, models, and relics: defensive armament and equipment; statistics.</p> <p>Navy Medical Service: models, equipment, methods.</p>	<p>Full-sized paravanes, and range finders.</p> <p>Armour Plating for H.M. Ships.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Actual Samples 2. Specimens subjected to enemy's fire. <p>Fragments of Ships, preserved as trophies of personal valour, etc.</p> <p>Relics of memorable ships, e.g. Lusitania.</p> <p>Models of famous ships of R.N. and M.M. other than such as are constructed exactly to scale.</p> <p>Care of Sick and Wounded.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hospital Ships and Base Hospitals: models, etc. 2. Uniforms and Nursing Service. 3. Methods of conveying sick and wounded ashore. <p>Women's Work during the War.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Uniforms worn by W.R.N.S. Officers and Ratings. 2. Personal Relics and Specimens.
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<p>Fleet Air Arm; models of naval aircraft, bombs, equipment, armament.</p> <p>Dominion Fleets; relics of actions, photographs, statistics, uniforms.</p> <p>Allied Fleets; photographs, uniforms, relics of actions.</p> <p>Enemy Fleets; captured trophies, photographs.</p> <p>Pictures, drawings, portraits, busts.</p> <p>Commemorative medallions.</p> <p>Charts.</p> <p>Photographs and films.</p> <p>Ship magazines and journals; official histories; published books.</p> <p>Admiralty publications, e.g. orders and regulations; strengths of fleets, returns of losses, navy lists, handbooks relating to weapons and ammunition.</p>	<p>War Memorials. Photographs, Plans, elevations and Models of memorials erected to the memory of Navy, Army, and Air Force Officers and Men.</p> <p>Dioramas, e.g. of Zeebrugge.</p> <p>Photographic and Film Records illustrative of categories listed above.</p>
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9.4 A Museum of the ‘Spectacular’

Following the Second World War, the Imperial War Museum and those so-called spectacular objects it collected and would collect over the interwar and post-war years, such as military vehicles, aircraft, boats and other equipment, and the interpretive material surrounding them, gradually became synonymous with each other. In 2009, for example, a poster campaign undertaken by the institution utilised silhouettes representing various large, imposing objects from the collection. Cornish (2012: p. 162) reveals that this marketing strategy was a response to visitor surveys which indicated they ‘were the most attractive element of the IWM’s collection to children’. The allurement of such objects on visitors stems from what Theodor W. Adorno (2003: p. 29) observes as people’s attunement with technology. This receptiveness has occurred through many societies the world over attaining increasingly technologically advanced conditions. Accordingly, Adorno argues that people have become fixated on technological impact, rather than effect. ‘People’, he explains, ‘are inclined to take technology to be the thing itself, as an end in itself’ (*ibid.*). This implies that a degree of fetishisation has arisen amongst developed societies over technology, which museums exploit in their interpretation and promotion.

The societal veneration of technology is conveniently legitimising to any museum that has become synonymous with displaying military equipment, particularly when killing machines are often regarded as the peak in technological development (Luckham 1984). It adds a certain cachet, which can be exploited for institutional gain. This could be in the pursuit of increased visitor figures, higher revenue, or wider museum market share.

But if museums use technological objects this way, such justifications for incorporating large military equipment in war exhibitions, as Cornish (2012: p. 162) contends, are secondary to the main rationale behind why they collect, display and interpret large equipment. When viewed through a long temporal lens, human conflict since 1914 is uniquely destructive (see Warner 2015), killing not just people, but also increasingly destroying their material culture,

architecture, and even the very landscapes they inhabit (Bevan 2016: pp. 17-18). This has come about, explains Cornish (2012: p. 162), owing to scientific advancement. ‘The industrialisation of war was the salient feature of both world wars’ he explains, ‘it was technological and industrial progress that gave them their shockingly lethal character and permitted them to be waged on such an unparalleled scale’ (*ibid.*). A more meaningful, nay ethical reason for displaying military technology in war exhibitions is the capability their spectacularness has to springboard issues and ideas about the furtherance of human ability and everything that entails during war and armed conflict. Accordingly, as Cornish posits, ‘in order to discharge its remit, the Imperial War Museum is obliged to collect large pieces of military technology. One cannot attempt to represent modern conflict without showing the weapon-systems used to wage it’ (*ibid.*).

This use of the spectacular embodies the interpretive approach pursued by IWM today. Following the museum’s recent regeneration during 2014, various technological exhibits have simultaneously become, what Francesca Monti and Suzanne Keene (2016: p. 271) call, ‘star’ and ‘gateway objects’. That is, they comprise exhibits which, through their spectacularness, catalyse opportunities to explore related contexts. This current interpretative approach however contrasts greatly with its pre-Second World War approach. As discussed in chapter five (see subsection 5.2.3), before the Second World War, the Imperial War Museum followed a largely commemorative framework. Exhibits were framed as possessing intangible connections to the country’s national and imperial war dead, giving them sacred and memorial-like qualities. Any technological remarks became incorporated into the commemorative framework.

How the Imperial War Museum acquired its current interpretive paradigm is explained in prevailing scholarship to be a product of the institution’s post-war development. After the Second World War, the interpretation started focussing far more intrinsically on technological abilities and effects – aspects conducive to displaying the so-called spectacular – until this ability became the dominant theme. Research by Cundy (2017c: pp. 268-269) shows that, through

doing so, the Imperial War Museum slowly cast off its commemorative framework and instead adopted a technological framework. One example of this new approach, raised by Cundy, concerns the interpretation surrounding an ordinary tile, “blistered” by heat flash at Nagasaki’, which was acquired by the museum during 1950. The interpretation, she reveals, focussed on why the blast had impacted the tile in that way (*ibid.*: p. 169). Another example, which Cornish (2012: p. 169) provides, occurred following the development of the first atrium in 1989, built for exhibiting large objects near the entrance where the army and navy galleries previously existed. The interpretation initially used there, he states, was ‘strictly limited to the technology on show’.

The reason for the turn of the Imperial War Museum towards a technological framework after the Second World War has been given by its first post-war guidebook as resulting from visitor demand to see the ‘many new equipments evolved during 1939-1945, of which they had heard but had had few opportunities of seeing’, as well as general interest in the Second World War over the previous conflict (Imperial War Museum 1946: p. 2). Similar views around this time are also documented by the new Director of the Science Museum, Herman Shaw (1946: p. 172), who wrote in the *Museums Journal*:

There is no doubt whatever, that during the last few years, probably as a result of war-time developments in science and engineering, the public has become increasingly conscious of the impact of science on their everyday life, and are clamouring for authoritative information regarding all branches of science and scientific research.

This coheres with what Adorno (2003: p. 29) noted as society’s increasing interest with technology. But such sources and ideas delineate only half the picture. Granted, they help explain why the Imperial War Museum broke from its commemorative framework following the Second World War: perceptions of bottom-up, public demand. Yet they do not explain how the institution could

have realised this shift after following the same interpretative paradigm since 1920. Change of this nature requires significant institutional reframing, necessitating a strategy which would require legitimisation from all its stakeholders (Scott 2014: p. 72) defined here as anyone with interest in an organisation, project or decision (Bonnafeous-Boucher 2016: p. 2). Consequently, to better understand the reasons for why its development became possible, the outcome of the work by the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries in deciding a formula for distributing material must be examined and discussed.

9.5 Mitigating the Crisis of Irrelevancy, 1940-1941

9.5.1 Developing the necessary conditions to become a museum of the spectacular

After considering all the evidence received from the Imperial War Museum and National Maritime Museum, the Standing Commission's material allocation subcommittee recognised the latter as 'the premier establishment for the commemoration of the naval side of the present war'.¹⁹⁹ Its report therefore ruled that 'Records and relics of permanent historical interest which would continue the display of British maritime history on the lines of the existing collections should be assigned to the National Maritime Museum'.²⁰⁰

In contrast, the Imperial War Museum was accepted as an institution of popular appeal which catered for wider audiences. Accordingly, the Standing Commission acknowledged its claim to represent many and varied experiences and interests.²⁰¹ Yet, significantly, the report also agreed with the assertion made by Callender about the Imperial War Museum being concerned with collecting, displaying and interpreting 'spectacular' exhibits.²⁰² Consequently, the Standing

¹⁹⁹ TNA, EB 2/2, typed report with handwritten amendments representing the final draft, 'Sub-Committee on the Allocation of Relics of the Present War', p. 3.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² *Ibid.*

Commission adjudged that: ‘The Imperial War Museum should be regarded as having prior claim to material with popular or spectacular appeal’.²⁰³ No context was provided in the report for the term spectacular. As with Callender’s original intervention, however, its inference is on collecting and displaying star objects (Monti and Keene 2016: p. 271) related to the sharp end of the war at sea: naval hardware, which the Standing Commission agreed that National Maritime Museum would not typically have been concerned with displaying.

9.5.2 The outcome of the report of the material allocation subcommittee

Through the above process, the Standing Commission came to understand the Imperial War Museum as a museum that alongside war work performed by everyday society represented the shocking and awe-inspiring aspects of war. Laid before the Treasury on 14 August 1941, its report framed martial exploit and capability as an exhibit at the institution, comprising and upheld by individual items created from and for armed conflict. The production of this report comprises an important moment in the museum’s history. While the institution underwent reinvention from a museum on the ‘war to end all war’ to a museum on the two world wars, the discourse surrounding its mission started exploring new ideas. These ideas were eventually confirmed by publication during 1948. In its first public report for ten years on the national museums and galleries, the Standing Commission (1948: p. 18) repeated the view that

the National Maritime Museum should be regarded as the premier establishment for the commemoration of the naval side of the war in so far as records and relics of personal historical interest were concerned, but that the Imperial War Museum should have a prior claim to material with a popular or spectacular appeal.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

No longer, therefore, was the Imperial War Museum being considered purely along its founding lines. Instead, the Standing Commission legitimised a greater interpretation of the characteristics of contemporary conflict which assimilated with perceptions over the role the Imperial War Museum now performed.

The above process broadened perspectives on the conceptual underpinnings of the Imperial War Museum. Before the Second World War, the institution was treated principally as commemorative. The discourse arising from the conflicting demands between the Imperial War Museum and the National Maritime Museum over naval material and, subsequently, the Standing Commission's report on material allocation however provided the impetus for a new exhibition context wherein the drama of war enabled by greater engagement with inherently dramatic material and concepts could become more central. As Clive Gray (2015: pp. 22-23) explains in a broader context: 'The justifications for continuing with existing patterns of operation for developing new approaches to the sector depend upon how [...] multiple conflicting demands [such as these] are politically managed, and the grounds upon which legitimacy for the sector is based'. So, while post-Second World War public demand may have prompted the institution's technological framework, this episode serendipitously provided legitimacy for that demand to be addressed.

This outcome demonstrates that not all museum reinvention derives entirely from internal action. Sometimes, the process can be influenced by external meddling in a museum's affairs. No organisational or museal literature has been found which discusses such instances. This dearth presumably exists because the phenomenon rarely occurs. By demonstrating it here though through the case of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era, the current chapter helps close that gap in the literature. Similarly to most organisational change, externally influenced conceptual reinvention stems from dissatisfaction (Beckhard 1975: p. 45). It specifically stems from a sense of organisational dissatisfaction arising out of perceptions of competition. Crucially, however, this takes place amid a context where the prevailing

business philosophy is not predicated on outcompeting competitors, such as in the museum sector (Kenyon 1995; International Council of Museums 2018). The situation transpires when the dissatisfied museum, in this case, the National Maritime Museum, causes the competitor museum to make the desired changes for them. As a result, any competition between the two is eliminated on the dissatisfied museum's behalf at the competitor's expense. The process occurs through lobbying key influencers connected with the competitor, including their stakeholders. Through occurring, externally influenced conceptual reinvention has potential to impact a reinvention programme by influencing the conception of the vision which the transforming museum seeks (Beckhard 1975: p. 45).

In the end, the report produced by the Standing Commission's material allocation subcommittee addressed the question of distributing potential exhibits amongst the museums using 'broad principles'.²⁰⁴ Through doing so, it defined loose categories for the pending material, and then indicated where the material comprising those categories should be deposited. But the nature of the material under each category was left open. Consequently, the report did not bring complete closure to the question over what objects should be deposited at which museums. It did, however, set the terms of the debate for when this debate would eventually take place. To address the question, the report recommended that a disposals board be established which could 'decide the allocation of objects of value from an historical point of view as representing the share of the Service and other Departments in the war effort'.²⁰⁵ Although its constitution was not considered, the report recommended that the board be composed of a representative from the three service departments, the Ministry of Home Security for civil defence matters, and the three national museums.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

9.6 Chapter Conclusion

Before the Second World War, aside from embodying a museum on the ‘war to end all war’, the Imperial War Museum also embodied a commemorative museum. It sanctified and memorialised the war dead of the United Kingdom and British Empire. Through doing so, the museum did not present technology for technology’s sake. Rather, it presented objects with stories, many of which happened to be technological. Any comments about such attributes formed part of the commemorative framework of interpretation that the museum employed. Yet in becoming a museum on the two world wars, it can be seen that the Imperial War Museum also became increasingly a museum on war technology, with both technology and commemoration competing for prominence. As the post-war years advanced, technology eventually won out. This shift occurred via the conceptual reinvention process undertaken towards its overarching wartime reinvention programme in response to the crisis-conducive situation brought about by the threat of post-Second World War cultural relevancy.

Through this example from the case study, the current chapter argues that successful reinvention in the museum context involves much more than the reinvention of what a museum does. It also involves the reinvention of what a museum is and is for: crucial for change to be meaningful. Without this understanding, museum reinvention risks taking place either without direction or without ever commencing, both outcomes potentially causing significant ramifications in an instance where change has been deemed necessary. Indeed, only when possessing vision about some future desired state can actual, considered museum reinvention confidently take place. In making the case to the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries for exhibits from the new world war, the Imperial War Museum demonstrates having reframed its *raison d’être* and rationale towards reinventing. The evidence submitted conveys the desire and plan that the museum would represent both world wars along existing interpretive frameworks and established representational and demographic lines.

That vision would not materialise as originally conceived however. This is because the intervention by Sir Geoffrey Callender for the National Maritime Museum in the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries' work to determine what material should be deposited at which museum following the Second World War catalysed an emergent, alternative discourse about the Imperial War Museum. Specifically, it disrupted the received wisdom on what the museum was and was for. This served to modify the institution's conceptual reinvention. Indeed, after the Second World War, Callender's intervention enabled the Imperial War Museum, through its reinvention, to respond to post-war public interest in technology, with the relevant issues and ideas having been factored into the museum's wartime reconceptualisation. At reaching this finding therefore, the chapter also argues that conceptual reinvention is not strictly an internal affair. It can also be influenced by external forces where those forces derive from a vested interest in the outcome.

By focussing on the conceptual reinvention of the Imperial War Museum, this chapter has considered the first stage in the process that comprises museum reinvention. The other half is *translating reinvention*. This transpires when a museum instigates new practices and states of existence in line with its newly reconceived conceptual underpinnings. Consequently, the next chapter explores the remaining process, focussing on the museum's first steps to acquiring new collection material and storage space so that the new material could be received.

Chapter 10 Materialising the Reconception, 1940-1948: Translating the Conceptual Reinvention of the Imperial War Museum

10.1 Chapter Introduction

Over chapter nine I began exploring the reinvention of museums in mitigation of what was conceived during chapter eight as deep-revolutionary crisis: an intangible crisis situation which derives from increasing misalignment between the impacted museum and the society it serves. The chapter showed that organisational reinvention comprises a two-stage process that begins with the transforming museum's conceptual reinvention. This is because only with clear understanding about what the completed transformation should look like can organisational reinvention be successful. But vision alone is not enough. Organisational reinvention also requires an awareness of how the vision should be enacted and an enactment that brings the vision into reality.

The current chapter is the final findings chapter towards this thesis. It is also the last of the three case study chapters exploring the work of the Imperial War Museum to resolve the crisis-conducive situation which was confronted there following perceptions of cultural irrelevancy in the wake of the Second World War. Previously, chapter eight contextualised this crisis-conducive situation. It explored how the museum detected the signals, sensed the significance of the situation and conceived the necessary resolution and mitigating strategy. Chapter nine then started considering the museum's mitigating response by exploring its conceptual reinvention. Drawing inspiration from the reinvention formula presented in chapter four (see subsection 4.6.2), the chapter focussed on activities and processes which led to the detailed conceptualisation of the desired state which informed the museum's reinvention (Beckhard 1975). Over this chapter, I conclude my consideration of that mitigating response. Also drawing inspiration from the reinvention formula, it explores the first steps taken by the museum to deliver on the conceptual

reinvention (*ibid.*). Through addressing this topic, the chapter also explores the challenges underlying a strategy by which museum reinvention is realised. I contend that reinvention processes require patience, creative mindsets and capacity for adjustment once the strategy is underway. In considering all this, the chapter contributes towards addressing aim three, objective three; aim five, objective three; and aim six, objectives two and three of the study.

The reinvention of the Imperial War Museum was greatly impacted by national strategic demands in British society during the Second World War. This context arose from the total war effort which the conflict had become for the United Kingdom after May 1940 onwards, where all persons and property became liable to the compulsion of the state (*Emergency Powers (Defence) Act 1940*), and where everything useful became either a resource for societal subsistence or military application, plus an enemy target (HC Deb. (1940-1941) 364, col. 1160; Uhle-Wettler 1994: p. 1047). Alongside the death and destruction caused by the hostilities therefore, mass rationing and prioritisation of supplies arose, hampering everyday processes and operations, limiting nonessential projects, and generally making regular consumptive activities less achievable or permissible. The privations and restrictions caused by the Second World War dogged the Imperial War Museum from mid-1940 until well after the conflict. Accordingly, the museum faced many challenges in attempting to translate its reinvention, requiring multiple methods and changes to the task.

This chapter continues to present the reinvention of the Imperial War Museum using the two-stage articulation established in the previous chapter which draws on ideas forwarded by reinvention theorist Willie Pietersen (2002). Whereas the first stage explored in chapter nine involves conceiving a new paradigm for an institution, the second stage which I explore in this chapter concerns the work to materialise that new paradigm through reconfiguring the museum's various organisational elements. The current chapter therefore considers what I frame here as *translating reinvention*. This comprises work geared towards analysing and understanding the outcome of the conceptual

reinvention process and interpreting how this vision can be realised. Similar to chapter nine, the activity is framed here as being constitutive of a preventative crisis management strategy informed by Christine M. Pearson and Ian I. Mitroff's (1993) general five-stage framework for crisis management.

This chapter explores the above over three substantive sections. The first section (10.2) explicates the translating reinvention process. It elucidates the notion and the connected issues, ideas and activities. The second substantive section (10.3) then considers activities which the Imperial War Museum performed to translate conceptual reinvention. It firstly explores how this was achieved against the museum's collection. It then explores how this was achieved against the museum's spatial facilities. And the third substantive section (10.4) discusses how the threat posed by cultural irrelevancy and the subsequent mitigating reinvention process constitutes an example of deep-revolutionary crisis and management thereof. It achieves this by synthesising the concept with findings from the case study over chapters eight, nine and ten.

10.2 Translating Reinvention

If the conceptual reinvention of a museum is about renewing the museum's *raison d'être* and rationale, then translating reinvention can be understood as interpreting conceptual reinvention and applying it against that museum's structural elements. Generally, to translate involves taking meaning mediated through one form and conveying that meaning accurately through another (Hatim and Munday 2004). In the organisational reinvention context therefore, translation can be seen as taking the meaning mediated through some new proposed paradigm and conveying that meaning through the elements of the organisation, accounting for modifications or radical changes where needed.

At first glance, translating reinvention might appear to be little more than delivering on some museum's conceptual reinvention. After all, as discussed in chapter nine (see section 9.2), conceptual reinvention comprises a series of complex thought processes that define how some organisational reinvention will

transpire, whereas translating reinvention may be held as little more than a series of mundane actions which merely serve to make reinvention occur. Translating reinvention may also seem relatively uninspired compared with conceptual reinvention. Moreover, through constituting the crucible in which a new state for some museum is conceptualised, conceptual reinvention can be viewed as a creative development process, whereas translating reinvention may be held as little more than initiating a series of straightforward methods to bring that vision into fruition. But this particular understanding would be far from fair.

Translating reinvention is more than just physically delivering on reinvention. It involves comprehending a new *raison d'être* and rationale conceived for some museum, determining the existing structure of that museum and the elements therein which need to be modified so the museum can cohere with the new paradigm, and then overseeing those structural alterations.

The process of translating conceptual reinvention onto a museum's physical and metaphysical structure involves reconfiguring its manifold organisational elements in line with the museum's desired state. Pietersen (2002: p. 71) thematises the various issues, ideas and activities which comprise this work as *alignment*. It involves readying the museum by preparing those elements to support the transformation and each other. Otherwise, a museum will not be capable of assuming its new paradigm. Pietersen proposes four organisational elements that must take priority for successful reinvention: measures and rewards, structure and process, culture, and people. The first element, measures and rewards, concerns what defines and drives organisational success (*ibid.*: pp. 139-141; Janes 2013: pp 274-276). When reinventing a museum, recalibrating the way in which outcomes are gauged and the nature of the incentives encouraging them may become necessary. Through adopting an alternative paradigm, the pre-existing methodology for defining and driving success might be rendered obsolete. The museum that reinvents from a for-profit to a more typical not-for-profit model, for example, may find its former commercial performance measures and rewards unpracticable in the third sector

and therefore needing replacement (Frey, Homberg and Osterloh 2013). The second element, structure and process, concerns the physical and conceptual aspects that constitute organisations: facilities, departments, teams, output, etcetera (Pietersen 2002: pp. 141-142). Depending on the outcome of a museum's conceptual reinvention, such aspects may need modification to facilitate the new *raison d'être* and rationale (Bienkowski and McGowan 2021: pp. 126-128). This could be by changing the way departments are formed, reconstituting management structure, or amending the physical assets available as required (Linkner 2014: p. 77). The third element, culture, concerns the ideas, customs and transactions of staff in an organisation (Pietersen 2002: pp. 142-143). Specifically, these are the routine or predictable behaviours therein derived from collective or dominant understandings, perceptions and assumptions. Aligning organisational culture with the new paradigm is imperative for successful museum reinvention (Anderson, in Janes 2013: pp. 192-204). An unsupportive culture may deliberately or unintentionally undermine a new strategy, and therefore threaten its sustainability (Pathak 2011: pp. 30, 35-38). The fourth element, people, concerns the workforce (Pietersen 2002: pp. 143-147). Museums rely on people for their continuing operation. It is important therefore that staff members are brought about to see the need for reinvention and can be focussed on making the necessary interventions (Bienkowski and McGowan 2021: pp. 106-109). Dissatisfied staff, or staff fearful of what change might mean for them, may unconsciously or otherwise prevent museum reinvention from occurring (*ibid.*: pp. 103-105; Strebel 2009). All this demonstrates that an alignment of organisational elements must include not just physical elements, but also metaphysical elements.

Another factor in the process of translating reinvention onto a museum's structural elements concerns overseeing the process's successful completion. Pietersen (2002: p. 210) thematises the various issues, ideas and activities which comprise this work as *execution*. In doing so, he warns against framing it as the final implementation of the reinvention process. This is because the whole

process, all the activities associated with conceptualising and translating reinvention, are concerned with implementation. Rather, Pietersen frames execution as a reinvention's successful delivery through reflexive learning (*ibid.*). Put another way, execution is the work of reflexively adjusting the process where challenges arise to bring about the desired outcome. There are two core considerations in this regard. The first consideration concerns the environmental context defined broadly wherein a museum's reinvention takes place. Those planned and carried out under ideal circumstances obviously stand greater chance of being easily and cleanly implemented compared with those which are poorly planned and/or carried out under crisis conditions. The problem however is that most organisational reinventions rarely occur, if ever, under ideal circumstances. Only when the urgent imperative for change arises, with all the haste and trauma this situation can necessitate and entail, do organisations find themselves embarking on reinvention (Goss, Pascale and Athos 1993: p. 98). Moreover, in the messy, unpredictable real world, external and internal events can transpire which disrupt even the most carefully orchestrated reinvention by altering the situation. This may require the abandonment of certain initiated interventions, or require new interventions to be plotted (Kanter, Stein and Jick 1992: p. 372). Reinvention processes therefore cannot be taken for granted. Their execution is often unsystematic and difficult, a reality which museums contemplating reinvention should fully anticipate. The second consideration concerns the need for ability and willingness to experiment during the organisational reinvention process (Pietersen 2002: pp. 211-219). If a reinvention's environmental context has unpredictability or there are few resources available with which the reinvention can be delivered, the adopted change plan may require changes, perhaps multiple changes. Under these circumstances, the review of progress against the prevailing hypotheses on the cause and effect relationships underpinning the chosen strategy is vital. Where planned interventions become un-implementable or fail to produce sought after

effect, the strategy should be modified until the desired state becomes fully and securely instituted with all the objectives met (Hayes 2018: pp. 458-461).

Given the broad purview that translating reinvention entails, this chapter focuses on what are held here as the most important first steps undertaken by the Imperial War Museum towards realising its reinvention (Beckhard 1975). These were, firstly, steps to acquire new exhibits from the war and, secondly, steps to acquire space to store those new exhibits. Without either, the reinvention could never have taken place at all: limited storage would have hampered the Imperial War Museum from developing its collection, while a limited collection in turn would have hampered the museum from attaining the vision set during the conceptual reinvention. They are therefore treated here as critical components towards the museum's transformation. In doing so, the chapter concentrates on the alignment of structure and process at the Imperial War Museum: the most germane elements to these examples. It must also be emphasised that the chapter does not offer a complete exploration of these first steps. The sources on both topics are voluminous, precluding an analysis that addresses all the issues and ideas which could be considered in one chapter. Consequently, the first steps which were taken are discussed here with a focus on the key points in the processes, leaving broader considerations for another study.

10.3 Mitigating the Crisis of Irrelevancy, 1940-1948

10.3.1 First steps to aligning the collection

The alignment of the collection of the Imperial War Museum is a clear example of what Pietersen (2002: pp. 141-142) calls structural alignment, interpreted here as including both physical and metaphysical considerations. It also comprises an appropriate response to the question which Pietersen recommends all organisations should ask themselves when undergoing reinvention: 'To best support the new strategy, should the firm be organized by product line, customer grouping, function, geography, or some other principle?' (*ibid.*: p. 141). As demonstrated in chapter five (see subsections 5.4.1 and 5.4.2), museum

collections, whether tangible or intangible, are central to museum organisation and purpose (Campbell and Baars 2019: p. xvi). They are an important basis for the public support of museums and are a nucleus around which museums develop (Janes 2013: p. 112). Indeed, the crisis-conducive situation that the Imperial War Museum confronted from threatened cultural irrelevancy as the Second World War approached could only have been resolved if the collection had been reorganised accordingly. It follows therefore that the collection was the ‘principle’ around which the museum reinvented.

First steps by the Imperial War Museum towards acquiring new exhibits from the Second World War began once the Treasury had consented to its redefinition, discussed during chapter eight. Most of those items collected over the war years mainly comprised two-dimensional records such as official, ephemeral and grey documentation. On occasion however, three-dimensional objects were also collected where the opportunity arose. When this took place, the benefactor tended to be a private individual or collective.²⁰⁷

There were two reasons why the Imperial War Museum started by focussing on collecting documents. The first was to prevent gaps in the museum’s documentary representation. Although replaceable, such material often had a short utilitarian lifespan. So while multiple, indeed potentially many copies of posters, pamphlets, leaflets, etcetera were printed in their production runs, the short period wherein they were used and/or their geographical distribution limited opportunities for collection.²⁰⁸ The second more practical reason was because the Imperial War Museum ‘could hardly concern ourselves with more’,²⁰⁹ to quote the Director-General, Leslie Bradley, at the war’s outset.

²⁰⁷ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GUN/001/1, see documentation therein.

²⁰⁸ IWM, MA, EN2/1/LON/001/1, typed letter, Director-General to Clerk to the Council, 5 June 1940; IWM, MA, EN2/1/LON/001/1, typed letter, Director-General to Clerk to the Council, 26 November 1940.

²⁰⁹ TNA, AIR 2/10188, Bradley to Ross, 24 October 1939, p. 2.

Aside from possessing limited space, the museum's building was inappropriate for storing rare material through its vulnerability discussed in chapter seven:

One difficulty that we shall have to consider is that of storing the material during the war, for this building, as you know, is entirely unsafe, both in location and construction, and it was for this reason that we evacuated most of our valuable possessions, so that it would seem unwise to begin to full [*sic*] it again with new material, although of course, this does not apply to photographs so long as the negatives are kept in a safe place elsewhere.²¹⁰

This situation provides a clear example of the impact that environmental factors can have on translating reinvention and the need for incorporating reflexivity in the chosen strategy (Pietersen 2002: p. 10). The context wherein change takes place greatly influences its pace and course (Bienkowski and McGowan 2021: pp. 11-13). In the case of the Imperial War Museum, the context threatened to literally destroy any progress made towards the reinvention. This means that the translation required being carried out carefully, with consideration for both the strategy and the strategy's success (Kanter, Stein and Jick 1992: p. 372).

Collecting documents comprised a way forward in that regard. It enabled the museum to make progress while ensuring a chance to repeat work if need arose. Notwithstanding their limited print runs, the fact that posters, pamphlets, leaflets etcetera were produced in numbers mitigated somewhat the risk of their loss were the museum significantly damaged. Although this risk did not stop Bradley from accepting the original document representing the defunct Joint Declaration signed by Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler mentioned in chapter six (see subsection 6.5.1), presumably an opportunity too good to miss.²¹¹

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ TNA, FO 371/24420, see documentation therein.

The Imperial War Museum made arrangements for systematic collections from national government, the local authority and colonial governments overseas during the Second World War. Collections of material from the national government were arranged through the Treasury, which sent a letter to government departments requesting that the Imperial War Museum be included on their circulation lists.²¹² Collections of material from locally distributed material were directly arranged with the authorities which produced it.²¹³ And collections of material from colonial governments were arranged via the Colonial Office. This came about through a memorandum by the Imperial War Museum and despatched by the Colonial Office which requested that collections representing the military and civilian war effort from each territory be made.²¹⁴ Although the memorandum included suggestions for likely three-dimensional material of interest, it predominantly focussed on documentation.²¹⁵

Notwithstanding those few occasions where individuals gifted three-dimensional items to the Imperial War Museum, work towards acquiring such exhibits began earnestly near the war's conclusion. As discussed in chapter eight on the conceptual reinvention of the Imperial War Museum, during 1940-1941 the Standing Commission on Museums and Galleries produced a report commissioned by the Treasury that made recommendations for the distribution of material from the Second World War between the Imperial War Museum, National Maritime Museum, Science Museum and the Royal United Service Institute Museum.²¹⁶ One recommendation advised establishing a Disposals

²¹² TNA, T 162/742/3, typed letter, Green to Bradley, 29 January 1940.

²¹³ IWM, MA, EN2/1/LON/001/1, typed letter, Salmon to Bradley, December 1940.

²¹⁴ TNA, CO 323/1752/5, draft typed letter, MacDonald to all Colonies, Protectorates and Mandated Territories, 28 February 1940.

²¹⁵ TNA, CO 323/1752/5, typed memorandum, 'Enclosure In Circular Despatch Dated 28 February 1940'.

²¹⁶ TNA, EB 3/19, typed letter, Beresford to the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum, 23 April 1940, p. 1.

Board to ensure the dispersal formula it had created was applied fairly.²¹⁷ The Standing Commission submitted this report in August 1941, which was approved by the Treasury in 1942.²¹⁸ No further action then occurred until April 1945 when a letter about the matter from the Royal United Service Institute Museum prompted the Standing Commission to resurvey the aforementioned museums on whether the recommendations it had made still held relevance.²¹⁹

The Trustees of the Imperial War Museum considered this question at their meeting of 8 May 1945. Through doing so they ‘reaffirmed their view that it was for the Departments to give recommendations and advice to the Trustees as to what exhibits should be included in the Museum to represent the Department’s share in the war effort’.²²⁰ Reporting this decision back to the Standing Commission, Bradley contextualised their position by emphasising the information requirements and support they needed in overseeing such work:

[I]t would be quite impossible for the Trustees to be in possession of sufficient information to enable them merely to ask the services for this or that particular item with any hope that the resulting collections would form an adequate record of the material used by the Services and Home Front Departments during the war.²²¹

With the other museums also in favour of convening the Disposals Board, a meeting was held on 17 December 1945 attended by representatives from the museums, including Bradley, and relevant government departments concerned.

²¹⁷ TNA, EB 2/2, typed report with handwritten amendments representing the final draft, ‘Sub-Committee on the Allocation of Relics of the Present War’, p. 6.

²¹⁸ TNA, EB 5/4, typed letter, Reynolds to Stephens, 30 April 1945, p. 1.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/004/4, draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 8 May 1945, p. 2.

²²¹ TNA, EB 5/4, typed letter, Bradley to Reynolds, 12 May 1945, p. 1.

The issue behind this position stemmed from the diminished ability of the Imperial War Museum to collect material compared with its ability during and after the First World War. Since 1918, potential acquisitions had dramatically increased in size. Indeed, Bradley had previously concluded that through the ‘tendency since 1914-1918 [...] towards increased size of material’,²²² any collection of the new war would have to be ‘much less ambitious and very much more selective’.²²³ He justified his point by observing that ‘guns are certainly no smaller, types of tanks and mechanized vehicles more numerous’.²²⁴ This recognition marks what Pietersen (2002: pp. 141-142) calls processual alignment. Specifically, it was an alignment of the process by which the museum collected exhibits. As Pietersen explains: ‘Moving to a more innovative mode will probably require significant changes in [...] how [...] decisions get made’ (*ibid.*: p. 142). Where following its foundation the museum had been concerned with making a collection of ethnographic proportions (Malvern 2000: p. 188), the environment created by the Second World War forced the museum to follow this new conflict with philosophy and procedures that made the museum more discriminatory over what would and would not be collected.

To call the meeting on 17 December 1945 the Disposals Board, as subsequent scholarship has done, is a misnomer (Parsons III 2013: p. 84).²²⁵ No actual dispersals were made from it. This is partly because the progress by the service departments on earmarking objects for the museums had occurred unevenly: a further nod to the environmental challenges which can impact on museum reinvention (Bienkowski and McGowan 2021: pp. 11-13). The Air

²²² IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/085/1, typed memorandum, ‘Collection of Material Relating to the Present War for Exhibition in the Army Galleries and for Record in the Reference Departments of the Imperial War Museum’, p. 1.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ TNA, EB 5/4, typed memorandum, ‘Allocation of Relics of the Late War’, by Reynolds, 13 March 1946.

Ministry had pushed for the Royal Air Force to maintain an active earmarking programme,²²⁶ albeit with the vision of eventually establishing its own aviation museum.²²⁷ The War Office, by contrast, had done the opposite. Five years of intense pressure on the British Army meant very few land-based related items were earmarked over the Second World War.²²⁸ Occupying an intermediary position, the Admiralty had got the Royal Navy to make lists of material that could be earmarked if requested by the museums concerned.²²⁹

It is worth reflecting on the problems this disparity posed the reinvention of the Imperial War Museum. At their combined peak strength in June 1945, the British Army and the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service comprised some 3,110,800 service personnel. This contrasted greatly with the relevant services of the Admiralty and Air Ministry. The naval services had peaked at 855,000 during June 1945 and the air services had peaked at 1,176,400 in June 1944 (Central Statistical Office 1951: p. 9). For an institution that reputedly served the everyday person, providing insufficient representation of the experience of the services which had employed the greatest number of individuals could have been greatly delegitimising. Indeed, it risked entrenching the very crisis-conducive situation which the reinvention had been initiated to avert.

Despite these pitfalls, the meeting of 17 December achieved progress towards the intended outcome. It was agreed that the Admiralty and Air Ministry would immediately circulate documents listing the available material amongst the relevant museums. The War Office would also prepare lists of possible material and circulate.²³⁰ From these documents, the museums would indicate *prima facie* what they wanted. If any disputes arose, the matter would

²²⁶ TNA, EB 5/4, typed meeting minutes, Disposals Board, 17 December 1945, p. 4.

²²⁷ TNA, EB 2/2, typed report with handwritten amendments representing the final draft, 'Sub-Committee on the Allocation of Relics of the Present War', p. 2.

²²⁸ TNA, EB 5/4, typed meeting minutes, Disposals Board, 17 December 1945, p. 3.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

be referred to the Standing Commission for a decision. Where no decision was attainable, the Treasury would arbitrate.²³¹ To try and avoid this possibility however, the museum directors agreed that a meeting should be held between them before requests were made so they could clarify each other's aspirations.²³² Figures 13, 14 and 15 depicts various examples of material which the Imperial War Museum obtained through this process displayed just after the war when the museum reopened with its own exhibition on 26 November 1946.²³³

10.3.2 First steps to spatial alignment

Arranging to acquire three-dimensional material from the service departments was necessary for the reinvention of the Imperial War Museum. But their actual acquisition would be impossible if the museum did not also acquire the requisite storage space. Early recognition of this requirement prompted the Imperial War Museum to begin the first steps to aligning its spatial requirement with its newly conceived paradigm during July 1940 before the precise nature of the institution's reinvention had been fully conceived. This second structural alignment process (Pietersen 2002: pp. 141-142) began via a rationalisation programme which was undertaken sporadically until 1942,²³⁴ resulting in collection items with 'no particular history' or 'the possibility of exhibiting

²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²³³ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum: Part II, January 1944 to the Reopening of the Museum on 27 November 1946', p. 23.

²³⁴ IWM, MA, EN2/1/DIS/002/2, typed letter, unidentifiable individual [titled as Local Director] to Bradley, 6 July 1940; IWM, MA, EN2/1/DIS/002/2, typed letter, unidentifiable individual [titled as Local Director] to Bradley, 11 March 1941; IWM, MA, EN2/1/DIS/002/2, typed letter, unidentifiable individual [titled as Local Director] to Bradley, 14 May 1941; IWM, MA, EN2/1/DIS/002/2, typed letter, Williams to Bradley, 20 October 1942.



Figure 13 - A German one-man submarine on display at the Imperial War Museum after the Second World War. © IWM (D 29422).

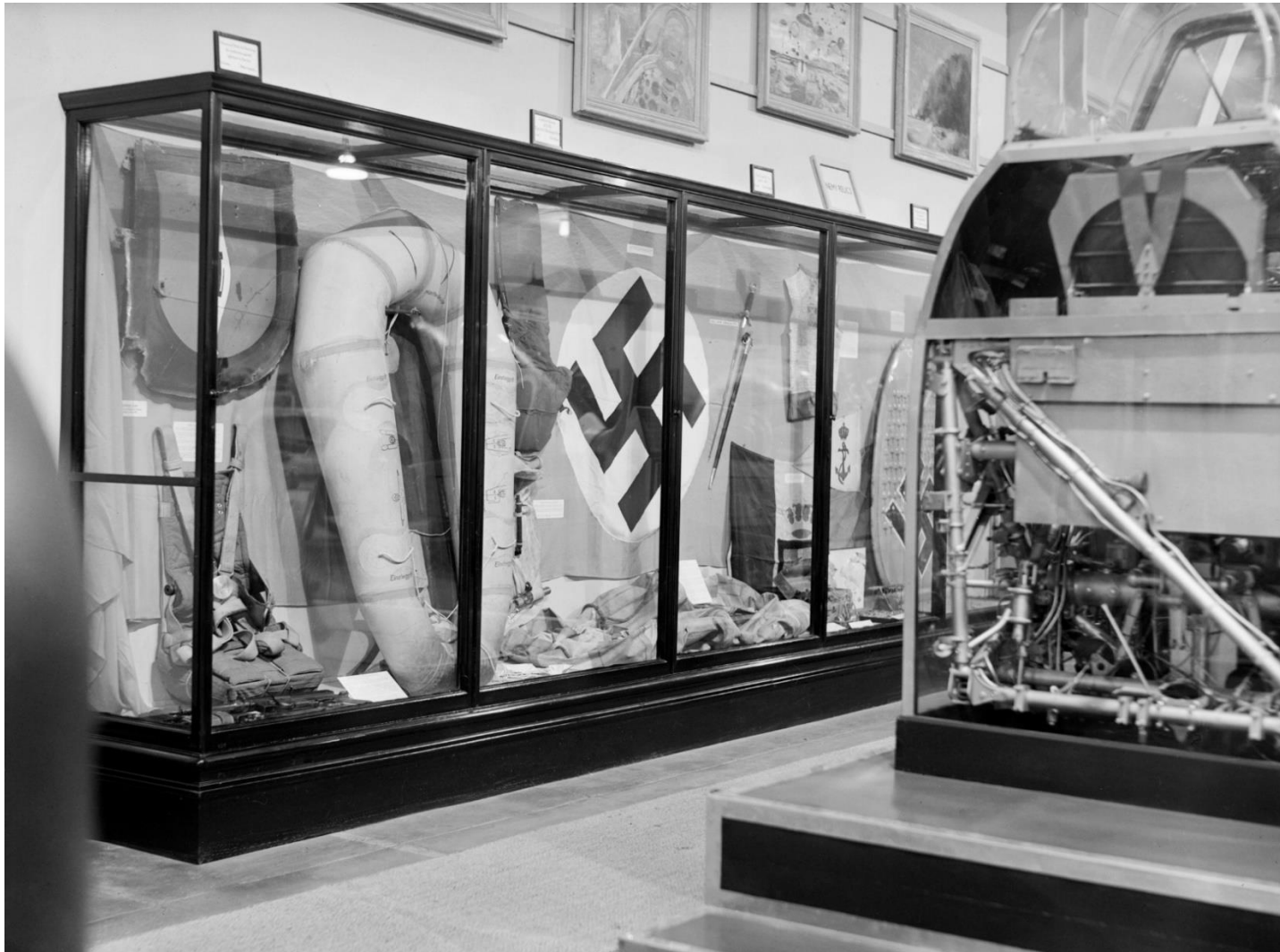


Figure 14 – A selection of ‘Enemy Relics’ on display at the Imperial War Museum after the Second World War. © IWM (D 29423)



Figure 15 – A Spitfire, jet engine and rocket projector on display at the Imperial War Museum after the Second World War. © IWM (D 29424)

which seemed very remote' being scrapped.²³⁵ Rationalisations occur when museums want to reduce the size of or streamline their collection. This could result for various reasons. It may have become unmanageable. It could possess too many duplications. It may even no longer represent or support the mission, values and vision of the museum (Matassa 2017: pp. 113-114).

The material sent for scrap comprised various items from the collection of the Imperial War Museum. These included guns, shells, aeroplane engines and naval equipment: objects made from industrial grade metals.²³⁶ Today, collection rationalisations are governed in most countries by policies and procedures predicated on law, ethics and other standards (Ambrose and Paine 2018: p. 196). Whether ethical considerations factored into the decision at the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War remains elusive. One could argue that given the pressing need for space plus the urgent public call by the government around that time for useful scrap materials (Thorsheim 2016: p. 61),²³⁷ the circumstances afforded the decision some legitimacy. Either way, it was undertaken within the parameters of the law governing the museum, because the *Imperial War Museum Act* 1920 afforded the museum the right to 'dispose of any objects belonging to the Museum which the Board consider unfit to be preserved or not to be required for the purposes thereof' (2c).

This initiative successfully freed up some space at the Imperial War Museum. Yet the results were paltry considering the amount required; it did not generate enough display or storage space for a full implementation of the proposed reinvention. Indeed, considerably more would be needed than could ever have been achieved through rationalising the existing collection alone. This means that further approaches to aligning the museum's structure were needed.

²³⁵ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed account, 'War History of the Imperial War Museum, 1933-1943', pp. 29-30.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*

The next method involved redeveloping its building. This initiative made sense in principle considering that the whole reinvention process was being undertaken to ensure the museum's long-term continuance. An enlarged building would, after all, expand both the storage and display space available there. Discussion with the Ministry of Works regarding this redevelopment was instigated by the Director-General, Bradley, during February 1943 which resulted in architects drawing up sketch plans for possible developments.²³⁸

The first of these sketch plans were shared with the staff and Trustees of the Imperial War Museum on 1 November 1943. This scheme utilised all four floors in the building and made provision for two visitor lifts, a cinema, workshops and library stacking that could hold 140,000 books and other such material.²³⁹ To facilitate the development with the minimal potential disruption of the museum, the architects had cleverly drawn up the plans so that the proposed development could be delivered incrementally over time as and when resources and manpower became available.²⁴⁰ Two subsequent sketch plans were submitted during 1944. The second followed a realisation by the architects at the Ministry of Works that more modern architectural techniques could elicit further space than previously realised.²⁴¹ The third followed concern from the museum's staff and Trustees about the utility of certain floors and facilities as presented in the second sketch plan.²⁴² By May 1944, there were various

²³⁸ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/103, typed letter, Bradley to de Norman, 10 February 1943; IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/103, typed letter, Bradley to de Norman, 22 February 1943; IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/103, typed letter, de Norman to Bradley, 21 April 1943.

²³⁹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/002/6, typed draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 1 November 1943, p. 2.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/003/1, typed draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 3 January 1944, p. 2.

²⁴² IWM, MA, EN2/1/MUS/016, typed memorandum, 'Note on the Proposed Reconstruction Scheme', by Blaikley; 10 January 1944; IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/003/2, typed draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 6 March 1944, pp. 2-3.

changes on the first plans. These included provision of over 100,000 square feet of space, at least 57,000 more than before the war; the placing of all the art galleries on the top floor; and the excavation of the ground floor.²⁴³

During transactions with the Ministry of Works regarding the redevelopment of the Imperial War Museum, both Bradley and the Board of Trustees were repeatedly informed that these sketch plans should be considered as nothing more than that.²⁴⁴ They comprised ideas and represented what could be possible on the site. The restoration of homes and essential facilities after the war in the immediate post-war period however would determine the speed at which this development could take place. Accordingly, just a few months after the architects had produced their third sketch plan, Bradley, having realised the unlikelihood of any development to the museum occurring soon, was already discussing a third method with the Ministry of Works.²⁴⁵

This supports Pietersen's (2002: pp. 210-211) assertion that organisations must be prepared to experiment with and alter their reinvention strategy as required. In fluid environments such as that experienced by the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era, where organisational change often takes place, an inflexible linear change programme puts success at risk. While a given strategy may once have suited an environment, physical and ideological changes therein can render the strategy unsuitable (Hayes 2018: pp. 458-459). Museums undergoing reinvention therefore must be prepared to reflexively

²⁴³ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/103, typed letter, Portal to Chatfield, 10 November 1943, p. 1; IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/003/3, typed draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 1 May 1944, p. 1.

²⁴⁴ IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/103, typed letter, Bull to Bradley, 1 July 1943; IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/103, typed letter, Batch to Bradley, 2 July 1943; IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/003/1, typed draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 3 January 1944, p. 1; IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/103, typed letter, Portal to Chatfield, 10 November 1943; IWM, MA, EN2/1/GOV/103, typed note, 'Imperial War Museum', by Bull, 14 January 1944.

²⁴⁵ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, Bradley to Secretary, 10 May 1944.

modify their reinvention strategy. Academic futurist Paul Saffo calls this the ‘ready, fire, steer’ approach to organisational development (discussed by Hall and Bock 2010: p. 82). This occurs where some new direction is conceptualised and its plan for implementation established and executed while reflexively taking account of and accommodating unforeseen events or challenges.

The third method, and the one which would eventually resolve this problem faced by the Imperial War Museum, involved acquiring external storage space. It comprised a long and arduous process for the museum, lasting approximately four years from mid-1944 until mid-1948. The earliest document making significant reference to the storage requirements of the Imperial War Museum is dated 10 May 1944.²⁴⁶ It put the off-site storage space required by the Imperial War Museum at 60,000 square feet, with 30,000 being at ground level.²⁴⁷ Further documentation also reveal that other essential requirements included cover, lighting, unfluctuating environmental conditions, minimum dimensions of 11 feet and 6 inches high and 15 feet and 9 inches wide, and accessibility to large *matériel* such as aircraft, tanks and guns. It was also desired that the site be in one-and-a-half hours travel from the museum, reachable by public transport, fireproof and as burglar-proof as possible.²⁴⁸ Accordingly, not any old backyard or warehouse was acceptable. With the requirements established, a long and challenging search began.

Over the next two years and three months, various possibilities were floated. These ranged considerably in venue type, their distance from the Imperial War Museum, and the overall potentiality of the site. The first, arising during May 1945, was a proposed development off Brook Drive, located just

²⁴⁶ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, Director to Secretary, 10 May 1944.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, Director to the Secretary, 7 March 1946; IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, anon. to Proctor, 8 March 1946; IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed specification document, ‘Imperial War Museum’.

behind the museum.²⁴⁹ The second possibility, arising three months later, was Embassy Filling Station on Ashburnham Road in Chelsea.²⁵⁰ After that fell through, Bradley demonstrates becoming increasingly concerned about the situation, describing the need as ‘really desperate and urgent’.²⁵¹ This is because the service departments, brought on by their own spatial requirements, had started threatening to discard the material which they had earmarked for the Imperial War Museum. It certainly increased the imperative of the search for space. A further three possibilities then arose in April 1946. These were Matching Aerodrome, Essex; Winkfield Aerodrome, Berkshire; and the Royal Ordnance Factory; Herefordshire.²⁵² None however amounted to anything. During June 1946, hope was kindled with an opportunity of acquiring 22,600 square feet at a Royal Air Force Maintenance Unit, Kidbrooke, east London.²⁵³ Although far from 60,000 square feet as desired in the original specification set out by the Imperial War Museum, Bradley reported to the Board of Trustees following his visit there that the site was ‘most satisfactory’.²⁵⁴ It even had ready workers which could be employed by the museum.²⁵⁵ In a cruel twist of fate however, despite positive discussions and negotiations, an executive decision by

²⁴⁹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, anon. to de Normann, 11 May 1945.

²⁵⁰ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, Beeston to Bradley, 31 August 1945.

²⁵¹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, anon. to de Normann, 15 February 1946.

²⁵² IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, Le May to Bradley, 5 April 1946; IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, Rogers to Plews, 11 April 1946; IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, Procter to Bradley, 16 April 1946.

²⁵³ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, Brightwell to Bradley, 3 June 1946.

²⁵⁴ IWM, MA, EN2/1/COB/005/4, draft meeting minutes, Board of Trustees, 1 July 1946, p. 2.

²⁵⁵ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, Brightwell to Bradley, 3 June 1946; IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed meeting minutes, ‘Kidbrooke R.A.F. Maintenance Depot’, 6 June 1946, p. 3.

the Board of Trade saw the space reallocated to the Ministry of Labour and National Service at the last moment without consulting the museum.²⁵⁶

Bradley forcefully protested against this reallocation.²⁵⁷ In response, the Imperial War Museum was offered storage at the Stevens Sandpits facility at Crayford, which exceeded the Kidbrooke site in size. It actually met all the requirements that the museum had laid down in May 1944. It also required only moderate structural intervention to become useable.²⁵⁸ The Imperial War Museum therefore signed the contract.²⁵⁹ What was not known at signing, however, is that the work towards the necessary intervention would become delayed until September 1948.²⁶⁰ As such, despite now possessing the necessary space on paper, the museum had to endure a further wait before using it. Until that time came, all the staff could do was hope the service departments would continue retaining items which had been earmarked for collection.

The fallout from this further delay which the Imperial War Museum experienced while awaiting the Crayford site's development is a topic for another study. Suffice to say however, the delay did not unduly derail its overall reinvention. Later documentation in the museum archive, reflections in the unpublished war history of the institution, and indeed the presence today of various key Second World War-related objects in the collection provide evidence which shows how despite contrary threats, the service departments continued to retain collection items until they could be accepted. It is fortunate this was the case. Aside from documenting their own histories, by continuing to retain material, the service departments not only helped secure the long-term continuance of the Imperial War Museum, but in the process also helped enable a post-Second World War public understanding of the conflict.

²⁵⁶ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, Brightwell to Bradley, 8 October 1946, p. 1.

²⁵⁷ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, anon. to Brightwell, 7 October 1946.

²⁵⁸ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, Brightwell to Bradley, 8 October 1946.

²⁵⁹ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, Staplehurst to Bradley, 1 April 1947.

²⁶⁰ IWM, MA, EN2/1/ACC/002, typed letter, anon. to Parkes, 23 September 1948.

10.4 Reinvention as Deep-Revolutionary Crisis Management

10.4.1 Sources of danger

This chapter is the third of three chapters that together have explored the crisis-conducive situation which confronted the Imperial War Museum in the Second World War era deriving from perceptions of post-war cultural irrelevancy and the mitigating response by the museum to the problem. The crisis type which this crisis-conducive situation embodied was introduced in chapter eight (see section 8.2) as a deep-revolutionary crisis. These are crises that impact museums metaphysically. It could be by damaging the perceived relevance of an impacted museum to the general public, or the museum's reputation. In either case, the result is diminishing organisational legitimacy, which makes museums appear decreasingly right and justifiable wherever they operate. Having established the premise of the deep-revolutionary crisis, demonstrated the way that the perception of post-war cultural irrelevancy influenced the Imperial War Museum, and how the museum managed this crisis-conducive situation, the current chapter now discusses the way both the museum's perception of cultural irrelevancy and response to it illustrates the deep-revolutionary crisis type.

Sources of danger arising from a deep-revolutionary crisis comprise anything that causes a disconnect between an impacted museum and the society it inhabits, such as failure by the museum to meet the wants, needs and interests of the society they serve. The threat is omnipresent because social systems are constantly shifting, although the rapidity at which they arise depends on the social system's stability. Museums which keep pace with the wants, needs and interests of society can avoid deep-revolutionary crisis. Those which fall behind become vulnerable. Montgomery Van Wart (1995: p. 429) estimates stable societies to undergo major value shifts over two generations, around 50 years. It follows therefore that in periods of instability, such as war and armed conflict, value shifts become more likely and unpredictable, with established institutions buckling under the strain of new social orders created out of the chaos of

societal turbulence (Marwick 1974: p. 13). The two world wars exemplify this (Marwick 1988; Marwick, Emsley and Simpson 2001). In the United Kingdom, for example, the 35 year period following the onset of the First World War in 1914 saw two major societal shifts: the establishment of universal suffrage following 1918 (Law 1997) and the modern welfare state including a national health service from 1945 (Gladstone 1999: pp. 32-51).

The deep-revolutionary crisis-conducive source of danger confronted by the Imperial War Museum over the Second World War era was the threat that the public would cease to recognise its founding concept or have interest in its subject remit after the conflict. Neither element represented the contemporary context from September 1939. The Imperial War Museum had been established in 1920 on the premise that the First World War was the ‘war to end all war’ (Malvern 2000).²⁶¹ Through conveying this idea, it focussed on displaying and interpreting war fought by the United Kingdom and British Empire over a very specific time period (Wellington 2017: pp. 237-256). The coming of the Second World War however invalidated the museum’s founding concept. It had also, so the Imperial War Museum (1946: p. 2) believed, captured public interest away from the First World War. Without modification to its *raison d’être* and rational, the general public might have stopped supporting the museum.

10.4.2 Potential effects

In line with a deep-revolutionary crisis, the possibility that the general public would stop supporting the Imperial War Museum potentiated significant disruption there by way of diminishing acceptability and everything that entailed. As with all organisations, museums must demonstrate public benefit to attract funding and retain support (Kelly 2006). If they cannot demonstrate a public benefit, museums may find the argument behind pursuing their aims and

²⁶¹ IWM, MA, EN1/1/REP/032, typed report, ‘Imperial War Museum: 21st Annual Report of the Director-General to the Board of Trustees’, p. 1.

objectives and consuming resources in the process increasingly difficult to make. That various instances can be found of museums and other heritage attractions having closed – before the worldwide coronavirus pandemic – through diminishing support exemplifies this possibility (see, for example, Martin 2012; anon. 2013; Calcaterra 2015; Stewart 2016; Hill, Laura 2016).

While the Imperial War Museum did not experience disruption through diminishing support, key individuals in and outside the museum were aware of its potential, as discussed during chapter eight. Bradley, for example, is previously quoted to have ‘see[n] no future for the Museum if it was to remain merely a Museum of the last war but one’.²⁶² This also became a view at the Treasury. As one official was shown to believe: ‘Future generations [...] would not attend in large numbers a Museum whose exhibits were limited to the last war’. Consequently, fear of this prospect focussed minds to mitigating it.²⁶³

10.4.3 Practical and critical significance

The practical significance of the danger of post-war cultural irrelevancy on the Imperial War Museum underscores the deep-revolutionary crisis by potentiating the reduction of institutional and organisational legitimacy. Such crises bring about disruption through misaligning a museum with the social system, thereby causing infringements to the implicit contract between institution and society which requires that museums make relevant contributions therein (see Byerly 2013). Where the contracts become broken, diminishing social, political and economic capital follows through passive disinterest in or active questioning of the museum. This articulation holds with the modern reading of crisis (Koselleck 2006: p. 161) that something is gripped by a situation which it must rectify to become liberated from the crisis conditions. The danger posed by post-war cultural irrelevancy had such a dimension for the Imperial War Museum. As

²⁶² TNA, AIR 2/10188, typed letter, Bradley to Ross, 24 October 1939, p. 1.

²⁶³ TNA, T 162/742/3, handwritten memorandum, by an unidentifiable individual, 9 October 1939.

discussed in chapter eight, unless some intervention prevented misalignment from arising, this threat was perceived to potentiate conditions that would ultimately restrict or cut the flow of resources which the museum needed to continue existing and dispensing civic services.

This broad critical significance arising from the threat of post war cultural irrelevancy also underscores the deep-revolutionary crisis. As explained, such crises arise from a disconnect with societal values rather than a rupture in the lived environment. Hence the museum impacted by deep-revolutionary crisis will not have become threatened with operational collapse, but rather departed from the norms and/or expectations of society. This requires a critique that not only analyses the situation regarding the museum, but also explores beyond the museum's confines, analysing the wider societal context. The nature of the museum, the nature of society, and the nature of the relationship between both are fundamental to the existence and understanding of deep-revolutionary crisis. Indeed, the Imperial War Museum was not the victim of rupture when confronting the threat of post-war cultural irrelevancy as the Second World War approached. Rather, it was the inhabitant of a rapidly changing world which needed to keep pace by acknowledging and representing the new world reality.

To further illustrate the practical and critical significance of the deep-revolutionary crisis on the Imperial War Museum, an analogy can be drawn with what Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci (1971: p. 210) conceived as an *organic crisis* in political contexts. There are clear similarities between both scenarios. During organic crises, circumstances prompt the proletariat and other 'ruled' classes to question the legitimacy of the authority and control previously maintained by the political ruling class, and to threaten to abandon it. Thomas R. Bates (1975: p. 364) interprets this as occurring because 'the people cease to believe the words of the national leaders'. Consequently, Gramsci (1971: p. 210) argues that the ruling class, through 'changes [to] men and programmes [...], with greater speed than is achieved by the subordinate class, reabsorbs the control that was slipping from its grasp'. Similar could be posited about the

Imperial War Museum which foresaw such a prospect occurring and countered the threat by reinventing. Through updating its *raison d'être* and rationale, the museum averted pessimism or disbelief in its message in the face of emerging discontinuity and debate over the merits of dissolving the institution.

10.4.4 Mitigating measures

The response by the Imperial War Museum to the threat of post-war cultural irrelevancy initially involved accepting that the museum now inhabited a new and irreversible social system, which its existing *raison d'être* and rationale were incompatible with. On arriving at this acceptance, the response then involved redefining the existing *raison d'être* and rationale accordingly so they could become compatible once again: the core objective when mitigating deep-revolutionary crisis. Taking inspiration from the idea of revolution – where, as per Simon J. Knell, Suzanne MacLeod and Sheila Watson's (2007a: p. xix) museal framing of it, 'the museum sees two possible futures, one that reflects the present trajectory and one that can be obtained by reinvention' – deep-revolutionary crisis requires an impacted museum to liberate itself from the problem through instigating a series of activities which draw on the transformation conceptualisation of resilience (Maguire and Cartwright 2008: pp. 4-5). Put another way, when resolving crisis, the museum must prevent the situation from causing its collapse by reconfiguring such that the problem gets cancelled out. The aim of deep-revolutionary crisis management therefore is to create a new organisational paradigm which accounts for the new world reality.

Exemplifying this response, from the moment that the danger of misalignment was detected, the Imperial War Museum worked to ensure that its *raison d'être* and rationale remained coherent with the wants, needs and interests of society. The ensuing reinvention strategy which embodied the response to the threat of post-war cultural irrelevancy encompassed two phases. The first comprised the detection phase. It was in this period that the perception of the potential misalignment between the museum and society became apparent

at the museum. The response was commenced by staff through sensing the situation considered in chapter eight: determining the circumstances surrounding the danger and the requisite resolution. Through doing so, the museum came to understand that what would be sought by society after the new war was a museum which represented their experiences of it. If the new war did not feature in the representation, the museum risked alienating existing audiences by appearing anachronistic. It also risked preventing new audiences from developing through offering little they could relate with. The reinvention that resulted from this sensing provided the capacity (Pursiainen 2018: pp. 79-81) and capability (*ibid.*: pp. 85-88) for the museum to address the misalignment. If successfully implemented, it offered a representation that people in the post-war landscape would recognise when the war ended and the museum reopened.

The second phase of the response comprised prevention. During this period, the staff averted the misalignment between the Imperial War Museum and society. The work involved three tasks: seeking the necessary permission from the relevant stakeholders to reinvent as discussed in chapter eight, conceiving and formalising the desired state that the museum would adopt as discussed in chapter nine, and performing actions which would see the museum reconfigure around its vision for the desired state as discussed in this chapter. Through reinventing, the museum assimilated the new societal context. This was not just a context wherein the framing of the First World War as the ‘war to end all war’ became untenable, but also one which saw interest with the Second World War overshadow the first as well as interest increase in the development and application of technology. Consequently, the reinvention process acquired new material for the collection which enabled it to make a representation of the new world reality. It also steered the museum towards presenting objects with increasing technological sophistication and profiling their technical attributes. By undertaking this work, the Imperial War Museum adopted a posture from which to begin satisfying the wants, needs and interests of the society served when the opportunity arose after the Second World War concluded.

10.5 Chapter Conclusion

The Second World War had a profound impact on the Imperial War Museum. Aside from the considerable operational disruption afflicting the museum through German aerial attacks on London, the conflict also disrupted the museum's philosophical underpinnings. Through doing so, it made the Imperial War Museum undergo significant ideological reframing. That is, the conflict catalysed a revolution in the museum's *raison d'être* and rationale. Accordingly, the museum was required to transition itself from a museum on the 'war to end all war' to a museum on the two world wars. This came about via reinvention: the process of establishing some new and desirable state and realigning the transforming organisation's various elements with that state.

This reinvention undertaken at the Imperial War Museum over the Second World War stemmed from fear of disruption caused by cultural irrelevancy in the event that some new conflict was to irrupt across Europe, especially one involving the United Kingdom. These circumstances created a crisis-conducive situation at the institution which clearly resembled what was conceived during chapter eight as deep-revolutionary crisis. By engaging with this concept over the case study, the thesis demonstrates that museums are vulnerable to misalignments in the social system. Through becoming misaligned, they risk losing the support of society. This in turn risks them losing legitimacy. The approach to resolving such situations as exemplified by the Imperial War Museum over the preceding case study is a paradigm shift which reconfigures a museum around the wants, needs and interests of the society they serve.

In contributing to this conclusion alongside the two previous chapters, the current chapter explores the vast, heterogeneous process of translating conceptual reinvention on a museum's physical structure. It focussed on the first crucial steps towards acquiring collection material from the new war and obtaining the space required so it could receive that material. Through doing so, the chapter demonstrates that translating reinvention in the museum context is a

process which will not necessarily take place with great ease. It requires a strategy that takes account of the environment and enables the museum undergoing transformation to build capacity for protraction and stalls in the process and potentially even reversals to facilitate a new and improved strategy or repetition if work undertaken towards a strategy is unintentionally undone.

The first steps undertaken by the Imperial War Museum to align its collection demonstrates the need for patience and reflexivity in a strategy. Experience collecting during the First World War showed that if the museum was to open with as complete a representation of the Second World War as possible, then it needed to start collecting immediately the conflict began. But the dangers posed by aerial attack and problems with limited storage space meant the museum began this work by focussing on small, replaceable records while trusting that prospective donor organisations – notably the armed forces – would earmark three-dimensional acquisitions for collection after the war as per arrangements. To ensure that three-dimensional material could be collected after the war, the museum simultaneously took first steps towards aligning its spatial facilities in three ways: rationalising the collection, developing the museum and securing external storage. Each method had varying degrees of success, with the second redevelopment being completely unsuccessful short-term, thereby prompting the search for external storage. This demonstrates the need for museums to factor multiple methods when devising a reinvention strategy. It also demonstrates the possibilities that experimentation can bring. In the case of the Imperial War Museum, developing the site on which institution was located potentiated considerable improvements to the museum that went beyond storage space. Yet the risk of experimentation producing no results, as occurred with the redevelopment, demonstrates the requirement for museums to initiate further methods when the unlikelihood of the success of one becomes apparent.

Chapter 11 Conclusion

11.1 Chapter Introduction

In this thesis I have presented research on how crises disrupt museums, and the contrasting defensive and revolutionary strategies which museums must adopt when mitigating crisis situations. I did so via a historical study of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era, 1933-1950, with particular emphasis on the Second World War years itself. The research I presented over this thesis advances the knowledge on museums and crisis, comprising the first study dedicated to exploring museological issues and ideas in the context of crisis and crisis management literature. In doing so, it exemplifies approaches via the case study which museums can follow when overcoming crisis, specifically the two types conceived during this research: the surface-defensive crisis and deep-revolutionary crisis. By extension, I also advance the discourse around organisational resilience and reinvention in the museum context.

Through this investigation, the thesis has substantially advanced the knowledge on the Imperial War Museum. It fills the final gaps in the history of the institution which, hitherto, largely avoided the Second World War era notwithstanding some specific if limited considerations.. It also corrects previous misconceptions over the legacy of the Director-General at the time, Leslie Ripley Bradley, who led the museum into the conflict and out the other side. Moreover, the thesis contributes generally to the history on museums under wartime conditions. Some 27 years ago, Gaynor Kavanagh (1994: p. 177) wrote: ‘The history of museums during the wars this [twentieth] century has still to be researched and written’. In the context of the United Kingdom, several key contributions have sought to address that observation, the recent work by Catherine Pearson (2017) on British provincial museums during the Second World War being a standout example. Yet, save for Debbie Whittaker’s (2010) master’s dissertation, no equivalent work has been undertaken on Britain’s national museums. This thesis therefore takes a step in addressing that gap too.

The research presented throughout this thesis has been structured around six aims established in chapter one (see subsection 1.2). The aims were to:

- I. Critique the extant literature on the history of the Imperial War Museum during the early- and mid-twentieth century to establish its museological and historical focus and consideration for the Second World War;
- II. critique the extant literature on the concept of crisis with particular regard for museums to establish the extent that museums have been considered in studies on crisis and crisis has been considered in studies on museums;
- III. identify difficulties which the Imperial War Museum faced over the years 1933-1950, with particular emphasis on 1939-1946, to ascertain the effects that the Second World War caused it, plus the museum's response;
- IV. assess the components that constitute a crisis to differentiate crisis situations at the Imperial War Museum from non-crisis situations;
- V. gauge how crisis impacted the Imperial War Museum to determine the ramifications that museums can experience when confronting crisis; and
- VI. gauge how the Imperial War Museum responded to crisis to conceive cogent strategies with which crises can be managed by museums.

This final chapter considers the extent that the thesis has addressed these aims and, ultimately, the overarching central question. It does so by bringing together the various results from my research and the analyses of the preceding chapters.

11.2 Overview of the Research Findings

11.2.1 Prevailing literature and place of the study therein

This thesis is the first sustained piece of academic work on the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War. The literature review, performed in chapter two, revealed that various other scholars, comprising Sue Malvern (2000), N. J. McCamley (2003), Terry Charman (2008), Debbie Whittaker (2010) and Alys Cundy (2015a), have each previously made valuable exploratory inroads into the subject, but only to a minimal extent. McCamley (2003) and Whittaker (2010) independently consider various aspects of the

Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era towards broader, multi-institutional studies: the former focusing on the safeguarding measures of British museums and galleries nationwide, and the latter covering safeguarding measures, service provision and post-war planning of the largest London national museums and galleries specifically. Malvern (2000) and Cundy (2015a), have used the Imperial War Museum to investigate various museological concepts, making references to the Second World War era in the process. Charman (2008) presents what was at the time of his publication the received wisdom on the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era which, most significantly, posited the years 1939-1945 as a catalyst for institutional decline. Overall, therefore, this literature raises many questions about the Imperial War Museum and its Second World War experience, and the impact the experience had on the institution in the post-war years and years thereafter. The thesis is a response to those questions.

As an institutional history, this thesis comprises a single, multi-perspective study on the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era, exploring not only the wartime effects and implications that the Second World War had for the institution, but also the legacies thereof. In doing so, it finds that the museum did not hibernate for the duration of the Second World War, as might have been perceived at the time. Rather, the museum was abuzz with war-related activity before, during and after the Second World War through managing multiple situations deriving from the conflict. Equally importantly, the thesis finds the received wisdom on the leadership there during the Second World War to be inaccurate. Rather than planning the museum's demise, which the former post-war Director-General Noble Frankland (1995; 1998) asserts – and whose views are forwarded by Charman (2008) and James Taylor (2009) – the Director-General at the time preserved the museum as a going concern.

This thesis also comprises the first sustained piece of work on museums and crisis. While the literature review revealed that other scholars, comprising David Lowenthal (2009), Tina R. Nolan (2009), Elizabeth W. Easton (2011),

Katja Lindqvist (2012), Jasmine N. Duran (2014), Sharon Heal (2015), Maegan A. Pollinger (2017), Ioannis Poullos and Smaragda Touloupa (2018), Marek Tomaščík, Kateřina Víchová and Eva Černohlávková (2018) and Bethany Rex (2020), have previously engaged with these concepts, they have not done so in a way that greatly critiques crisis *per se*. The overwhelming message of the literature is that to reduce the risk and threat of crisis, a museum must bring about some form of change. The exact change depends on the crisis context. In the context of financial crisis, Lindqvist (2012), Heal (2015), Pollinger (2017), Poullos and Touloupa (2018) and Rex (2020) encourage holistic change that realigns an impacted museum with the wants and needs of society. Through doing so, the museum will be more likely to secure financial investment, as it should now more closely support society's values and goals. In the context of crisis communication, Duran (2014) and Tomaščík, Víchová and Černohlávková (2018) encourage the reflexive development of infrastructure for managing public discourse surrounding crisis-conducive situations. This would help mitigate poor public opinion that can arise about a museum, and the impact such opinion can pose, following some controversy which it has become embroiled. And in the context of the skills crisis supposedly pervading Western art galleries, Easton (2011) encourages art galleries to reverse the perceived deterioration of the emerging workforce's skillset by variously promoting the development of more holistically trained curatorial graduates. As a result, the sector may continue to produce diverse exhibition programmes and hire personnel with the necessary management expertise. Yet this message about the importance of change in the literature towards preventing crisis is also tempered with concern for the process by the final two constituent works. Lowenthal (2009) and Nolan (2009) caution that change can also catalyse further problems, such as an identity crisis. Lowenthal (2009) discusses this at the organisational level. He argues that museums have undergone so much change in recent years that many institutions no longer know what they are or stand for. Nolan (2009), by contrast, discusses this at the personnel level. She argues that the near-

inevitable change to work duties which organisational change can catalyse risks causing uncertainty about and disillusionment with the role of impacted staff. Overall, therefore, this literature raises two key points about museums and crisis. The first is that change can be a powerful response to organisational crisis. The second is that organisational change should never be undertaken lightly. While concurring with both, this thesis shows that not all organisational crises will necessarily require organisational change for them to be overcome. Moreover, the concept of crisis appears to have been treated in a way that assumes universal acknowledgment and understanding of the situations covered by each study, as if the respective crisis comprised an objective phenomenon.

As a study on museums and crisis, this thesis explores the concept of crisis in relation to the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era. It analyses both strands simultaneously, raising the heterogeneous possibilities and potentials which crisis can pose museums, particularly their resolution. Consequently, this thesis argues that crisis situations impacting on museums, any crisis situation, are context dependent rather than universal phenomena. This means that where a crisis situation is perceived, the specific manifestation and requisite resolution will depend on the circumstances surrounding the museum at the given time. It will not necessarily require organisational change. Moreover, the thesis argues that somebody's perception of how some crisis situation should be resolved depends on the person being live to the crisis.

11.2.2 Conceptual backdrop

The next chapter to present findings from the study was chapter four. Exploring various concepts, it set out to raise the issues and ideas comprising, and which feed into, crisis. The study found that, as a term, crisis describes and conveys issues and ideas about difficult and challenging situations. Specifically, these are situations which have been perceived to be problematic for or disruptive to the *status quo* regarding some object. In the museum context, they could comprise, for example, physical defects in the superstructure of a building, or metaphysical

defects in the relationship between museum and society. Either way, these crises prevent the museum from functioning effectively. As a concept, the study found that crisis can help people understand some phenomenon from or regarding the world around them. Moreover, it can help them to situate themselves within the world around them. A crisis, therefore, also comprises a device that enables people to express their discomfort about a situation regarding some object and to propose a resolution to it, legitimised and supported by likeminded individuals. Drawing on all these findings, crisis was defined in this chapter as an unpredictable, unstable and potentially dangerous situation, where the impacted museum or other systemic entity will be disrupted, perhaps inoperably and irreparably, requiring extraordinary intervention to be overcome.

These findings reveal that crises are highly subjective. The manifestation of a crisis greatly depends on the crisis-conscious person's perceptions about the crisis object and the world around them. It was also found, therefore, that crisis should not be treated as an objective phenomenon, although individual conceptualisations can be studied as defined phenomena. This is because treating crises objectively risks presenting them as being commonly understood conceptualisations, which might not be the case amongst different people. It also risks assigning them a degree of causality for something, which similarly might not be commonly agreed to. A further finding was that crisis manifests in crisis objects variably. The nature of the manifestation depends on the situation being faced by the crisis object. Consequently, crises are not homogeneous constructs. They can arise from different contexts and manifest in different ways, meaning that no one methodology for dealing with them will work across the board.

11.2.3 Case context

Following chapter four, the thesis moved to consider the case study proper. This commenced during chapter five with a crucial look at the case's context. Specifically, it profiled the Imperial War Museum as an institution, organisation and museum, from the conception of the museum in 1917 to the eve of the

Second World War in 1939. While setting out the case's development from conception, to birth and to maturity, this chapter found that, despite being historically framed, the case broadly represents museums as they manifest today: institutionally, organisationally and museologically. This shows the findings in subsequent chapters convey contemporary significance, meaning they can be applied against present-day museums and other organisational types, giving them relevance to the museum practitioners and crisis managers of today. Another finding from chapter five is that throughout the interwar years, the Imperial War Museum demonstrated a responsive mindset carried into the Second World War. Through doing so, it established proven record of reflexive development as environmental conditions evolved. This was significant, because subsequent findings on crisis and change there during the Second World War became rooted in historical precedent, which added further credence to them.

11.2.4 Resilience

The findings from both chapters four and five were then taken and applied in chapters six through ten, supporting the production of findings therein. Chapter six explored the work by the Imperial War Museum to maintain a civic service over the Second World War. This was done to help differentiate crisis from other challenging situations. The Imperial War Museum continued performing a civic service despite being closed over the majority of the conflict. This closure took place because its building had been deemed too unsafe for public admittance, given the building's aged construction and general vulnerability to aerial attack. Even during 1940, when the museum temporarily reopened, such concerns imposed limitations on the objects which could be shown, where they could be shown, and how many people could be admitted at any one time. That it overcame these restrictions however demonstrates the potential of museums to think creatively, potentially problem solving a course around their challenges.

This study found that the Imperial War Museum overcame its challenging situation by implementing alternative means for delivering a civic service. This

is an effect of possessing what has become known as organisational resilience to adversity. Resilience occurs when museums or other organisational types undertake to draw on their relevant attributes to find work arounds to operational disruptions. Over the Second World War, the Imperial War Museum curated a temporary exhibition using what exhibition material was available when the general public could be admitted and engaged with individuals remotely when they could not. Even in the latter instance, it continued to admit individuals for research purposes by private appointment. At the same time, the museum supported the war effort by loaning or restituting items from the collection so they could be used towards various initiatives and by hosting local and national organisations and, sometimes, even helping them perform their respective work.

This study has found that resilience is a quality which can, and conceivably will in many instances, permeate museums; although, from the limited consideration the issue receives in museological literature, it has not been widely discussed. The ability of museums to survive through struggle and strife demonstrates a museum's potential resilience as outlined above, many having grappled with one or more challenges over their existence. Financial difficulties, problems with their physical or metaphysical infrastructure, dwindling admissions are all issues impacting museums today. The findings in this chapter showed that museum resilience can, often, derive from multiple organisational qualities, requiring significant investment for them to be developed. As argued herein, it is not something usually achieved through any one feature or action. Installing and maintaining robust infrastructure may represent one such possibility but will only support a museum where relevant. In the case of the Imperial War Museum, for example, it could not have supported the full range of services provided over the conflict alone. Other qualities were also necessary. During this study therefore, several approaches to building up organisational resilience have been considered. Aside from physical infrastructure, such attributes include employing appropriately qualified and creative staff and, perhaps more importantly, providing the necessary

organisational support so that the staff can discover, nurture and deploy their talents and creativity, especially under pressure when these skills are most needed. The production of the temporary exhibition at the Imperial War Museum, for example, required staff who knew what collections were available for display and the narrative they could convey. It also required organisational support to work and develop the exhibition outside institutional convention.

These findings are important, because they ultimately raise the prospect that not all organisational difficulty warrants a designation of crisis. As theorised in chapter four, organisational crisis comprises an extensive threat to an organisation's operationality. What the Imperial War Museum experienced through the events considered over chapter six, however, was far less problematic. They did not pose a disruption of potentially inoperable and irreparable proportions, requiring extraordinary intervention to be overcome. Rather, by drawing on resilience, the Imperial War Museum simply evolved its existing civic service model through modifying the model's structure. Accordingly, crisis would be an inappropriate diagnosis under these or indeed similar circumstances. To make that diagnosis would miss the subtle differences between crisis and other challenging situations, and risk the prescription of a remedy which was far from appropriate for the context, such as reinvention.

The above findings notwithstanding, resilience and crisis are not mutually exclusive concepts. As chapter four theorised and chapters seven through ten demonstrated, the former concept enables the latter concept: successful crisis management relies on the holistic strength which organisational resilience can engender. This is significant as it shows organisations must strive for resilience, whether they are in crisis or not. Consequently, the thesis demonstrates that museums which do constantly strive for resilience not only build-up their robustness, but also ensure they are better positioned to cope with crisis.

11.2.5 Surface-defensive crisis

This research has found that when overcoming difficult situations, including crises, museums must have the skills, knowledge, abilities and, where relevant, physical toughness which they can draw on in the process. No more so is this the case than when they deal with what has been conceptualised during chapter seven as a surface-defensive crisis, a situation which impacts on the routine operations of museums and other organisational types, rather than their cohesiveness with the social system. Chapter seven explored the surface-defensive crisis and its impact on museums through exploring the situation experienced by the Imperial War Museum in managing the effects of German aerial attacks on London during the Second World War. Attacks comprised air raids and ground-launched Vengeance-weapon attacks. The museum was extremely vulnerable to collateral damage deriving from these incidents. Located near the city centre, it occupied the firing line for many industrial targets. Moreover, the building's old and fragile construction exacerbated the risks they posed. In exploring this, the thesis argues that the Imperial War Museum was gripped by a significant surface-defensive crisis situation.

Surface-defensive crises arise from internal events such as water leaks and electrical short circuits, or external events such as subsidence, extreme weather and, as experienced by the Imperial War Museum, armed conflict or other human intervention, to list just five. They are not indicative of public opinion in relation to the museum. This means that such crisis situations are resolved through pushing back or defending against them. Indeed, dealing with surface-defensive crises is the objective of practical literature on coping with disasters at museums: managing events like floods, fires and earthquakes (Dorge and Jones 1999; Matthews, Smith and Knowles 2009; Dadson 2012). No viable alternative solution exists because the problem does not stem from the museum. The only internal changes that an impacted museum should contemplate are resiliency-orientated enhancements to its physical and metaphysical structure.

This study has found that surface-defensive crises may comprise extremely dangerous as well as disruptive situations for museums. They can potentially overwhelm a museum, and even cause its total collapse. They can also consume extensive resources in the process of being resolved. This research found that an effective way to minimise the risk of encountering surface-defensive crisis, therefore, is by establishing thorough signal detection schedules and undertaking prompt remedial action where emerging problems are discovered. As chapter seven demonstrates through exploring in detail Christine M. Pearson and Ian I. Mitroff's (1993) five-stage framework for crisis management, signal detection, followed preparation work where prevention has not proved possible, occupy the most important tasks in crisis management. Often, the success and failure of crisis management depends on rigorous and appropriate preparation measures that have been implemented by the museum.

These findings are important because ultimately all museums are vulnerable to surface-defensive crisis situations. Although the example at the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War was dramatic, any incident which disrupts everyday operations can potentially be significantly debilitating. And yet, while no crisis could ever be written or spoken about as fortunate, it is reassuring from a long-term sustainability perspective that such crisis situations do not signify any discontinuity between an impacted museum and the social system, conceivably meaning that their cultural relevancy has remained adequate, assuming no additional, underlying issues exist. Also reassuring is the straightforwardness of the crisis resolution: find the cause and neutralise the problem, or weather the storm where neutralisation cannot be contemplated.

11.2.6 Deep-revolutionary crisis

Not all crises exhibit such dramatic and potentially violent features as the surface-defensive crisis. This research found that some are more subtle and chronic in nature, building up over longer periods beyond people's consciousness until they can no longer remain hidden, shown herein through

what has been conceptualised during chapter eight as the deep-revolutionary crisis – a situation where a museum experiences diminishing societal support from increasing irrelevancy. Chapter eight explored the impact of the deep-revolutionary crisis by exploring the discourse from within the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War surrounding the belief at the time that it needed to expand its subject remit or face becoming culturally irrelevant following the conflict. Over 1917-1939, the museum had been framed as a museum on the ‘war to end all war’. This was consistent with the national pre-Second World War understanding of the First World War. The Second World War however nullified that Wellsian premise, placing the museum’s future in doubt. It therefore updated its *raison d’être* and rationale and began work to represent this change through its collection. In exploring this, the thesis argues that the Imperial War Museum became threatened with a deep-revolutionary crisis situation which was successfully averted by undergoing wholesale change.

Deep-revolutionary crisis situations arise from an emerging misalignment between the mission, values and vision of a museum – their *raison d’être* and rationale – and the wants, needs and interest of the society served. They do not derive from events *per se*, but rather from inevitable shifts in the issues, ideas, and objects that society places value on. They are a constant threat as societies are constantly shifting. The strategy necessary for managing such a crisis therefore can be traumatic, involving an adjustment to the impacted museum so that it can align once again with the social system. This involves casting off an old paradigm and embracing the new one, whatever the cost in time and resources may be. It is essential therefore that an impacted museum makes all the necessary changes to resolve the problem, otherwise the realignment may not go far enough. Save for an unlikely reversal in the societal value shift which caused the misalignment, the problem will not go away and likely only intensify.

This study has found that deep-revolutionary crises, as with surface-defensive crises, can be extremely damaging to museums. But unlike surface-defensive crises, deep-revolutionary crises are also often difficult at first to

observe, which can hinder and compromise their resolution. This is because they usually do not exhibit any symptoms in open view. Moreover, by the time their symptoms show, perhaps on spreadsheets or in exhibition spaces themselves, the root problem may be too ingrained to resolve. It is essential, therefore, that deep-revolutionary crises are sought out before they manifest. Accordingly, drawing again on Pearson and Mitroff's (1993) five-stage framework for crisis management, as chapter eight does, a museum should establish thorough, targeted signal detection schedules for comparing and assessing its *raison d'être* and rationale against the wants and needs of society, and undertaking prompt value adjustments where these are deemed necessary. Fortunately, when detected, museums can maintain far greater management over deep-revolutionary crises than surface-defensive crises, as the deep-revolutionary crises begin and end with the museum. Put another way, because they arise through a museum's inertia and are resolved through action undertaken by that museum, the nature of their resolution is entirely museum dependent. The earlier deep-revolutionary crises are detected, the more manageable they are, for the smaller the necessary value adjustment, the less traumatic the experience.

These findings are important because, as with the surface-defensive crisis, ultimately, all museums are vulnerable to deep-revolutionary crisis. It is, after all, an inevitability that societies will undergo some form of value shift. For the Imperial War Museum, the deep-revolutionary crisis-conducive situation transpired following a sudden, dramatic, and significant event which radically altered the conceptions about the issues and ideas on which the museum had been established. But value shifts will not always occur under such unstable circumstances. They can, and usually will, occur under more stable circumstances, where they occur gradually and subtly. In this latter instance, deep-revolutionary crisis transpires when a museum has accrued a certain level of misalignment with the social system which can no longer be sustained.

Again, while no crisis could ever be spoken about as fortunate, it could be seen as reassuring from an operational perspective that such crisis situations do

not signify any practical issues with the impacted museum. Indeed, such crisis situations pose little to no risk of causing physical disruption. Also reassuring is the control that a promptly reactive museum can have over their outcome, even if the task embodies some complexity. This means that once an impacted museum has addressed the cause of the crisis, it occupies a strong position to continue operating as society expects. Even so, what the deep-revolutionary crisis lacks in physical toll and limited control it makes up for in insidiousness and potential for causing total organisational collapse without dislodging a single beam or brick. Arguably the greatest threat to any museum is the prospect of being let go by society for more relevant recreational offerings. Museums must therefore be on their guard for this situation or risk falling into a predicament which could be avoided and may not be recoverable from.

11.2.7 Reinvention

Given that the resolution to a deep-revolutionary crisis affecting some museum involves the impacted museum undergoing wholesale change, this research found organisational reinvention to be one, if not the only, solution that presents itself. Reinvention is the act of creating something new from something which already exists. Chapters nine and ten explored the work performed by the Imperial War Museum to reinvent itself in response to the envisaged deep-revolutionary crisis situation after the Second World War. This involved extending the museum's subject remit by making a new collection, ensuring that the Second World War became represented therein. The collection programme included not just two-dimensional material such as documents, posters and photographs, but also three-dimensional material such as large equipment, models thereof and small items. Chapter nine contributed to this consideration through studying the conceptual work undergone by the museum towards realising its expansion. Chapter ten, by contrast, did so by studying the practical efforts. In exploring this, the thesis argues that the Imperial War Museum

underwent a reinvention that touched both its physical and metaphysical components. Indeed, very little went untouched during the overall process.

Reinvention, in the organisational context, can represent a response to dissatisfaction with an organisation's status quo. The process of reinvention requires the recognition of some new desired state and cognisance of the first steps which must be taken so that the new state can be attained. To be deemed successful, the perceived benefit must outweigh the cost with the process. The understanding of cost is deliberately broad here. It not only refers to financial cost, but also the cost in time, effort and morale, amongst other resources.

This study has found that making value adjustments akin to reinvention is an effective strategy for overcoming a deep revolutionary crisis situation. By making value adjustments, museums can attain new states and/or identities. The more extensive their adjustment, the more dramatic their change, the more revolutionary their new states. Drawing on and adapting Willie Pietersen's (2002) ideas about organisational reinvention, chapters nine and ten showed that this occurred through a two-fold process of conceptual reinvention and translating conceptual reinvention into reality. At the Imperial War Museum, this process was so extensive that the museum which emerged from the Second World War in 1945 was conceptually unrecognisable from the museum which entered in 1939. It was also visibly different with new exhibits on display.

These findings are important because, ultimately, they support the premise that museums are capable of escaping a deep-revolutionary crisis, even if museums are not comfortable with the process. As with resilience discussed above, that long-standing museums still exist results from them making repeated changes in form and function over their existences. Owing to the dramatic nature of the deep-revolutionary crisis experienced by the Imperial War Museum, the reinvention it underwent was sudden and intense – more like a revolution than a value adjustment. But, as with value shifts, not all reinventions will transpire so dramatically. Most, by contrast, will conceivably transpire from multiple incremental changes, which over time mount up to comprise a

reinvention. It can be seen therefore that the dramatic nature of the reinvention which the Imperial War Museum underwent as a result of the Second World War masks the core underlying principle of organisational reinvention generally. This principal is that reinvention is not an unusual one-time process, but an incessant process which cannot be resisted without eventually severe consequence. As societies perpetually develop, the risk of the deep revolutionary crisis looms ever large over museums, especially over those which do not frequently make corresponding value adjustments. Accordingly, the reinvention process will remain an ever-lasting prospect for museums. Consequently, those that want to avoid reinvention at the scale experienced by the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War should where possible ensure they align their value adjustments with society's value shifts, rather than hold out until the ensuing misalignment becomes too unsustainable. While change is inevitable for museums, the nature of change very much depends on how museums treat it.

11.3 Opportunities for Further Research

This thesis has clearly demonstrated the potential capability of museums at overcoming crisis situations. Yet, as with all research projects, there are some limitations to the conclusions that the research can draw. Accordingly, there exists further credible research opportunities out of this project, with potential for developing the ideas presented herein, and testing them. From a historical and organisational perspective, there are worthwhile opportunities to take the ideas generated herein and applying them against other similarly impacted museums, or other organisational types, in other historical time periods.

Undertaking such a project would establish whether the ideas are unique to the case study presented during this thesis, or whether they are also applicable under different historical and organisational circumstances and contexts, the latter outcome further supporting the findings from this study. It would also increase the bank of case studies that crisis managers and scholars can consult when considering how crisis should be overcome by museums or other organisations.

Another important way where this research could be taken further is from the methodological perspective. Through comprising a historical study, the thesis was predominantly substantiated by documentary sources and other historical evidence. While these sources conveyed specific and valuable historical information regarding various transactions at the Imperial War Museum, none addressed crisis *per se*. Accordingly, the conclusions on crisis, its effect on museums and museums' responses to crisis, were drawn from a synthesis of theoretical and empirical findings: the former concerning crisis, the latter concerning museums. This does not diminish their quality or cogency. It does, however, mean that they must be understood as inhabiting the theoretical realm. Consequently, another research project could take the theoretical ideas raised during this thesis and explore them in contemporary examples.

Undertaking such a study would establish whether they have a practical basis as well as a theoretical one. If so, the findings will do more than help people think about the way crisis can impact museums and museums can respond to crisis, but also serve as reliable, practical guidelines for managing crisis situations.

11.4 What Does A Historical Study of the Imperial War Museum During the Second World War Era Reveal About the Ways In Which Crisis Can Impact on Museums and Museums Can Respond to Crisis?

This thesis addressed the central question: what does a historical study of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era reveal about the ways in which crisis can impact on museums and museums can respond to crisis? The answer, developed over 11 chapters, is as follows. Overall, the case of the Imperial War Museum during the Second World War era reveals that crisis situations can impact museums in two ways. One is through disrupting a museum's day-to-day operationality. This derives from something interfering with routine processes, procedures, and accessibility and/or by causing unsustainable damage to infrastructure. Another way is through bringing about a disconnect between a museum and the stakeholders and constituents in the

society wherein it operates. This derives from institutional and/or societal development that move the priorities of the museum and/or the society away from the other, causing misalignment between the two. Fortunately, the case also shows that museums are extremely responsive and capable organisations. With the right leadership and support, they can overcome diverse challenges, including situations embodying the crisis types conceived for this thesis.

From this study, the following four critical points can be made about the interplay between museums and crisis. Firstly, museums must ensure they possess organisational qualities that engender a holistic, base level of resilience to adversity. Without such attributes, museums may struggle at overcoming crisis situations, as they may not possess the requisite strength, skills or knowledge for dealing with adversity. Secondly, museums must understand whether the situation they are experiencing has crisis potential: whether the situation is unpredictable, unstable and potentially dangerous situation; whether it disrupts the museum, perhaps inoperably and irreparably; and whether it requires extraordinary intervention to be overcome. If so, thirdly, museums must identify the type of crisis being experienced: whether the crisis possesses defensive qualities, or whether they possess revolutionary qualities. The nature of the crisis then dictates the nature of the response of the museum. A surface-defensive crisis requires a museum to push back against the crisis effects. This is towards preserving the *status quo*, because the crisis does not signify anything amiss with the museum in its social, political, cultural, and economic milieu. A deep-revolutionary crisis requires museums to embrace, or at least accept, effects brought on by the crisis. This is towards assuming some new paradigm that realigns the museum's *raison d'être* and rationale with the wants and needs of society. Indeed, unlike surface-defensive crisis, the deep-revolutionary crisis indicates a broadening disconnect between the museum and the expectations surrounding it from its stakeholders and constituents. And fourthly, museums must undertake appropriate responses. For a surface-defensive crisis, this involves neutralising the threat where possible, or containing the threat and

limiting its effects. For the deep-revolutionary crisis, this involves instigating a programme of change to reconnect the museum with the social system.

In summary, museums are important institutional organisations. They are, however, incredibly vulnerable to crisis, which is a likely, if not inevitable, occurrence during the course of a museum's existence. Yet, with careful management, museums can be prepared to meet crisis head on. Following sufficient development of physical and metaphysical resilience to adversity, and with timely, accurate crisis detection, museums may implement crisis management strategies that address the effects of crisis situations. This could involve, as appropriate, strategies which preserve the museum's *status quo*, or update their *raison d'être* and rationale for the new societal context. Inertia or delay at any point along the crisis management cycle risks consigning the impacted museum to history, for crises of any nature are unpredictable, and cannot be counted on to resolve themselves or to progress at a slow pace. Accordingly, museums must be as crisis-ready, as much of the time, as possible.

Fortunately, through the actions of its staff, the Imperial War Museum was not confined to history during or soon after the Second World War. Rather, IWM, as the institution is known presently, currently presents the war history of the United Kingdom, from 1914 to the present, through constantly expanding its subject remit, and through constantly adapting the way its subject gets presented. As a result, the museum remains an important, vibrant, and much used institution. As James Taylor wrote in 2009 while occupying the position of Head of Research and Information at the Imperial War Museum: 'The Museum's continued and increasing popularity – especially when much lighter museums and heritage sites are on offer elsewhere in the capital and beyond – has always relied upon the organisation's ability and willingness to change'.

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