Crime in Liverpool and First World War soldiers from Hull:

using databases to explore the real depth in the data

Is it a good thing to have a lot of evidence? Surely the historian would answer that yes, it is: the more evidence that can be used, the better. The problem with this approach, though, is that too much data can be overwhelming for the history student – and, in Ian Phillips's experience, for the history student teacher. In this article Phillips presents a rationale for using databases to help students to sort through data. He suggests some misconceptions about his chosen topics – crime in nineteenth-century Liverpool and soldiers from Hull in the First World War - and shows how the data can be used to help students see and account for their misconceptions themselves. Acknowledging that using databases, especially in Microsoft Access, might not be easy for students or teachers, Phillips suggests easy ways of obtaining and using data about First World War soldiers from your own local area. This, then, is a blueprint for enabling students to gain a picture of life – and untimely death – a hundred years ago.

Ian Phillips
Ian Phillips is an independent History Education consultant. From 1996 to 2015 he was History PGCE Course Leader at Edge Hill University, Lancashire.

It is difficult to estimate how frequently teachers use databases in their history teaching. If I were a betting man I would say, 'Almost never.' Part of the reason might be that the effort involved in mastering the 'technology' is disproportional to the outcome. Commercial packages are few and far between and often do little more than illustrate a very specific point. Another issue relates to the number of records held in a database; many of them can hardly be said to contain a significant or meaningful evidence base. The databases discussed in this article are 'home made' and therefore serve very particular purposes. The Liverpool Crime database was used as a teaching tool with final-year undergraduate historians at Edge Hill University. It was used to get history undergraduates thinking differently and more critically about evidence as well as helping them to understand how databases can be used to support historical enquiry, and to unpick their own understanding of a particular historical topic – in this case the nature of nineteenth-century crime.

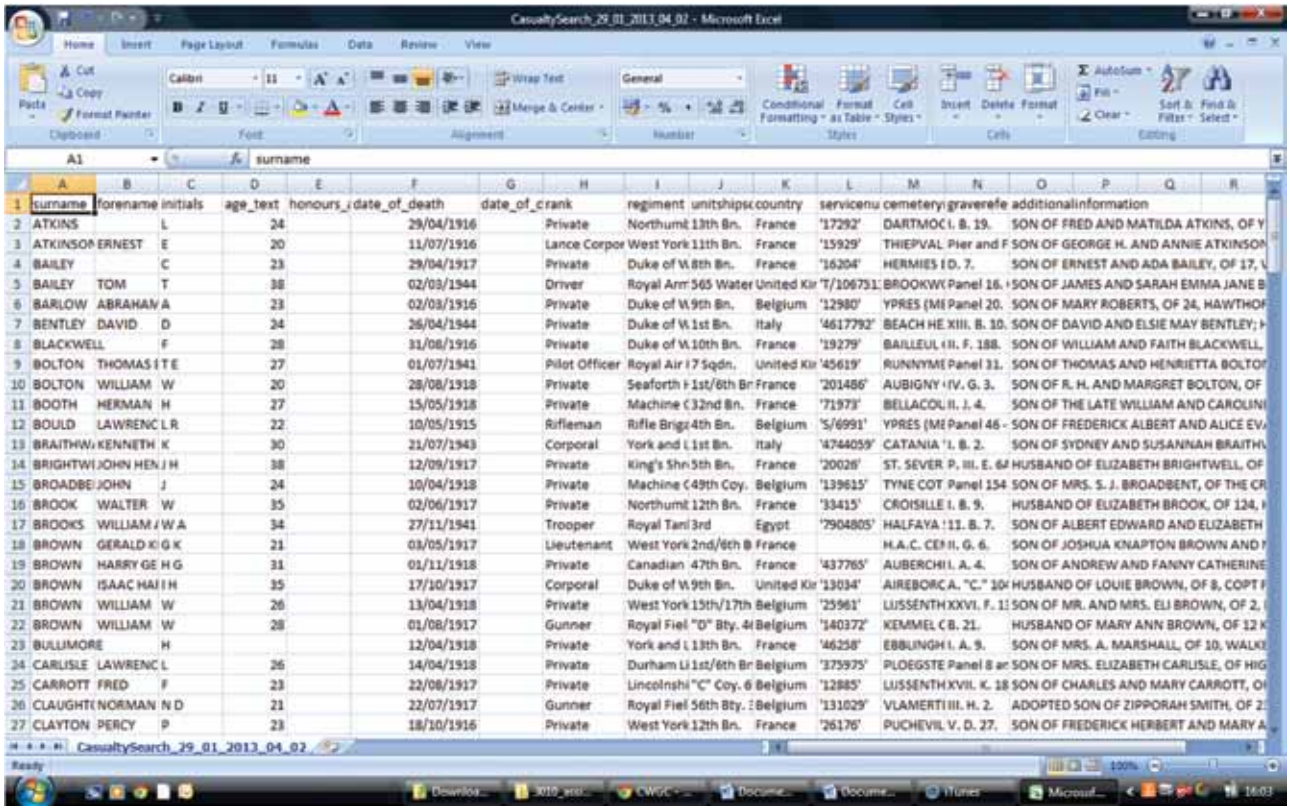
The Hull War Dead database is a worked example of a local or community resource which contains the details of all servicemen and women who died on active service during the First World War.[1] The records are drawn from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGS) site. When this evidence is exported into a database it becomes possible to ask questions of that evidence, in the form of database queries, and from these to develop a local study on the impact of the war on a community. The queries are essentially the historical questions which form the basis of a narrative account of one community's experience of the Great War.

Using database evidence

If there is a tendency to regard databases as difficult or dull, there is also something intriguing about lists of people from familiar places. An initial browse through names and addresses and family details arouses a natural curiosity. Asking questions, working details out, hypothesizing, drawing conclusions – all become an active challenge. Above all students engage their historical imagination, and then become engaged with the evidence.

Databases can be scary. Like a hard route up a mountain they have an unenviable reputation. Better to go up the tourist path (which won't be as challenging, but both routes lead to the summit and the view, after all, will be just the same). But with just a little courage and perhaps some self-confidence the challenging route can have its rewards. More than anything else a 'history' database (definitely not an Excel Spreadsheet) will allow you to ask hard and searching questions about the information, evidence or data contained in the tables. A database containing the records of the dead of the First World War from individual communities might sound impersonal: databases and spreadsheets after all are little more than lists, but they are lists of familiar names from very familiar places.

Figure 1: Guide to creating a database in Microsoft Access using data from the CWGC[2]



surname	forename	initials	age_text	honours_	date_of_death	date_of_c	rank	regiment	unitships	country	servicenu	cemetery	graverefe	additionalinformation
ATKINS		L	24		29/04/1916		Private	Northumt	13th Bn.	France	'17292'	DARTMOO	I. B. 19.	SON OF FRED AND MATILDA ATKINS, OF Y
ATKINSON	ERNEST	E	20		11/07/1916		Lance Corpor	West York	11th Bn.	France	'15929'	THIEPVAL	Pier and F	SON OF GEORGE H. AND ANNIE ATKINSON
BAILEY		C	23		29/04/1917		Private	Duke of W	8th Bn.	France	'16204'	HERMIES	D. 7.	SON OF ERNEST AND ADA BAILEY, OF 17,
BAILEY	TOM	T	38		02/03/1944		Driver	Royal Arm	565 Water	United Kir	'T/106731'	BROOKWO	Panel 16.	SON OF JAMES AND SARAH EMMA JANE B
BARLOW	ABRAHAM	A	23		02/03/1916		Private	Duke of W	9th Bn.	Belgium	'12980'	YPRES (ME	Panel 20.	SON OF MARY ROBERTS, OF 24, HAWTHOR
BENTLEY	DAVID	D	24		26/04/1944		Private	Duke of W	1st Bn.	Italy	'4617792'	BEACH HE	XIII. B. 10.	SON OF DAVID AND ELSIE MAY BENTLEY; H
BLACKWELL		F	28		31/08/1916		Private	Duke of W	10th Bn.	France	'19279'	BAILLEUL	II. F. 188.	SON OF WILLIAM AND FAITH BLACKWELL,
BOLTON	THOMAS I	T E	27		01/07/1941		Pilot Officer	Royal Air F	7 Sqdn.	United Kir	'45619'	RUNNYME	Panel 31.	SON OF THOMAS AND HENRIETTA BOLTO
BOLTON	WILLIAM	W	20		28/08/1918		Private	Seaforth H	1st/6th Br	France	'201486'	AUBIGNY	IV. G. 3.	SON OF R. H. AND MARGRET BOLTON, OF
BOOTH	HERMAN	H	27		15/05/1918		Private	Machine G	32nd Bn.	France	'71973'	BELLACOL	II. J. 4.	SON OF THE LATE WILLIAM AND CAROLIN
BOULD	LAWRENC	L R	22		10/05/1915		Rifleman	Rifle Brigz	4th Bn.	Belgium	'S/6991'	YPRES (ME	Panel 46 -	SON OF FREDERICK ALBERT AND ALICE EV
BRAITHW	KENNETH	K	30		21/07/1943		Corporal	York and L	1st Bn.	Italy	'4744059'	CATANIA	I. B. 2.	SON OF SYDNEY AND SUSANNAH BRAITH
BRIGHTWI	JOHN HEN	J H	38		12/09/1917		Private	King's Shr	5th Bn.	France	'20026'	ST. SEVER	P. III. E. 6A	HUSBAND OF ELIZABETH BRIGHTWELL, OF
BROADBE	JOHN	J	24		10/04/1918		Private	Machine G	49th Coy.	Belgium	'139615'	TYNE COT	Panel 154	SON OF MRS. S. J. BROADBENT, OF THE CR
BROOK	WALTER	W	35		02/06/1917		Private	Northumt	12th Bn.	France	'33415'	CROISILLE	I. B. 9.	HUSBAND OF ELIZABETH BROOK, OF 124,
BROOKS	WILLIAM /	W A	34		27/11/1941		Trooper	Royal Tanl	3rd	Egypt	'7904805'	HALFAYA	11. B. 7.	SON OF ALBERT EDWARD AND ELIZABETH
BROWN	GERALD K	G K	21		03/05/1917		Lieutenant	West York	2nd/6th B	France		H.A.C. CE	II. G. 6.	SON OF JOSHUA KNAPTON BROWN AND
BROWN	HARRY GE	H G	31		01/11/1918		Private	Canadian	47th Bn.	France	'437765'	AUBERCHI	I. A. 4.	SON OF ANDREW AND FANNY CATHERINE
BROWN	ISAAC HAI	I H	35		17/10/1917		Corporal	Duke of W	9th Bn.	United Kir	'13034'	AIREBORC	A. "C." 10	HUSBAND OF LOUIE BROWN, OF 8, COPT
BROWN	WILLIAM	W	26		13/04/1918		Private	West York	15th/17th	Belgium	'25961'	LIJSSENTH	XXVI. F. 1	SON OF MR. AND MRS. ELI BROWN, OF 2,
BROWN	WILLIAM	W	28		01/08/1917		Gunner	Royal Fiel	"D" Bty. 4(	Belgium	'140372'	KEMMEL C	B. 21.	HUSBAND OF MARY ANN BROWN, OF 12 K
BULLIMORE		H			12/04/1918		Private	York and L	13th Bn.	France	'46258'	EBBLINGH	I. A. 9.	SON OF MRS. A. MARSHALL, OF 10, WALK
CARLISLE	LAWRENC	L	26		14/04/1918		Private	Durham Li	1st/6th Br	Belgium	'375975'	PLOEGSTE	Panel 8 an	SON OF MRS. ELIZABETH CARLISLE, OF HIG
CARROTT	FRED	F	23		22/08/1917		Private	Lincolnshi	"C" Coy. 6	Belgium	'12885'	LIJSSENTH	XVII. K. 18	SON OF CHARLES AND MARY CARROTT, O
CLAUGHT	NORMAN	N D	21		22/07/1917		Gunner	Royal Fiel	56th Bty. :	Belgium	'131029'	VLAMERTI	III. H. 2.	ADOPTED SON OF ZIPPORAH SMITH, OF 2
CLAYTON	PERCY	P	23		18/10/1916		Private	West York	12th Bn.	France	'26176'	PUCHEVIL	V. D. 27.	SON OF FREDERICK HERBERT AND MARY A

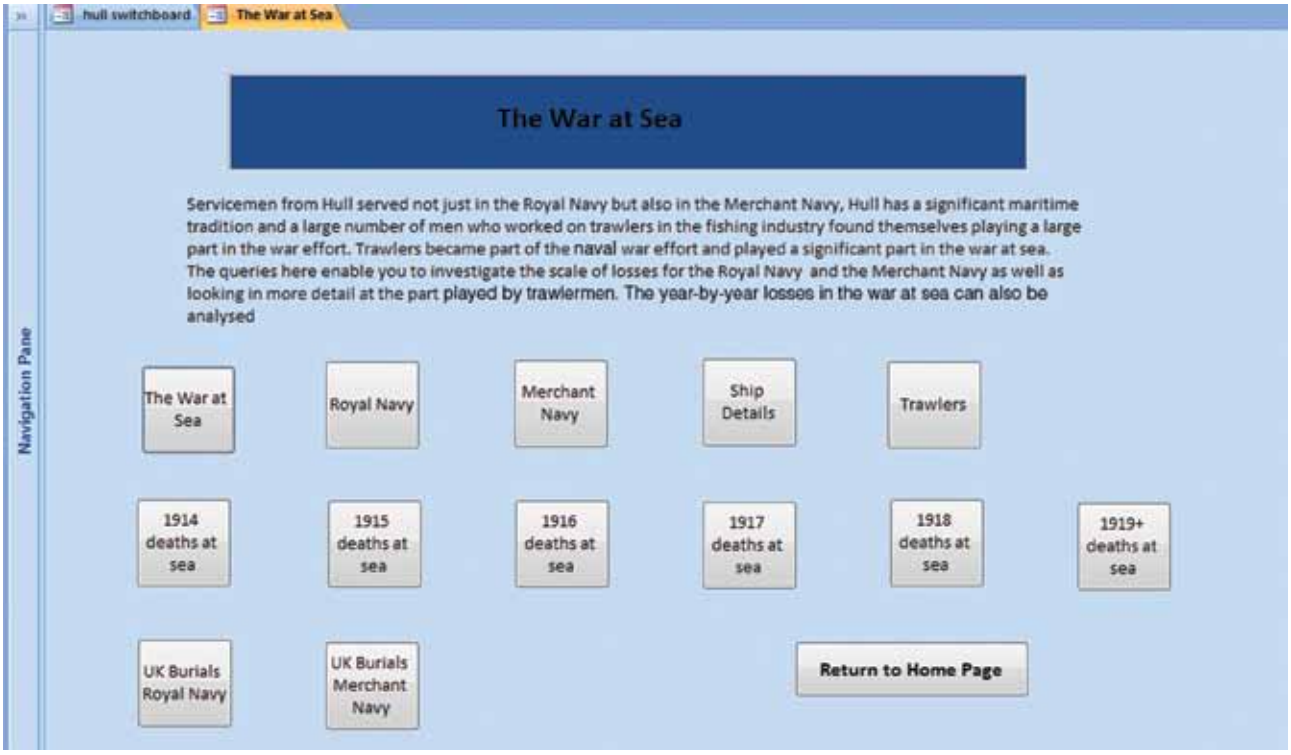
1. Go to the CWGC's website (www.cwgc.org) and in the 'Find War Dead' box, select 'Advanced Search'. Choose the conflict you wish to study, and then the name of the village, town or city for which you wish to search.
2. When you have found your data, click 'Export Data' to produce an Excel Spreadsheet, which will look like the screenshot above.
3. Select all the data and copy it by double-clicking on the top left of the spreadsheet and pressing CTRL-C.
4. Open Microsoft Access and create a new database, giving it an appropriate name.
5. When your new database opens, click paste or press CTRL-V

Databases and historical evidence: crime in nineteenth-century Liverpool

I've been a convert to databases for 15 years but it has always been hard to persuade more timid students and teachers that they can be a very powerful tool for historical enquiry. An example from my undergraduate teaching is revealing. Third-year undergraduates, many of whom had already followed a module or two on the history of crime, were therefore familiar with many of the issues relating to nineteenth-century urban crime and criminality. We developed as a teaching tool a database which sampled cases brought before Magistrates' Courts in Liverpool between 1850 and 1900: altogether there were just over 4,500 records. Using both their prior understanding of nineteenth-century crime and their local knowledge of Liverpool I asked the students to hypothesise about what they would be likely to come across in the database: plenty of drink related 'stuff', a great deal of prostitution and lots of Irish in trouble. It is always a good cognitive challenge to ask the students what they think the evidence is likely to reveal. In this case there was relatively little drunkenness, a few instances of prostitution and a mere handful of Irish in any kind of trouble with the local constabulary. Their predictions had gone very wrong – according to the database Liverpool appeared to be a sober and morally upstanding town whose Irish inhabitants were model law-abiding citizens – the complete opposite of all towns and cities in the second part of the nineteenth century. This anecdote is important rather than merely 'interesting' because it helps to demonstrate that the answers a database reveals depend, in part, upon the nature of the evidence as well as the way a query (a question) is asked of the evidence. So what went wrong?

- The details of the crimes held in the database were offences where the accused had been summonsed. Most people arrested for being drunk would have been picked up by police, held overnight and brought before magistrates in a Police Court. Prostitutes arrested for soliciting would have been dealt with in

Figure 2: Main Switchboard showing the main lines of enquiry, the interface which helps users to focus their research, and an example of one of the enquiry pages it leads to



a similar manner. So in this case legal structures and the legal system mean that these people didn't make it into the database records.

- All the data came not from official court records but from the pages of a local newspaper, *The Liverpool Mercury*, which was a campaigning Liberal newspaper interested in social issues. It was an important regional newspaper with a large circulation in the North West.[3] The data were therefore also mediated by the succession of court reporters through this 50-year period.
- The database was originally constructed by a researcher at Edge Hill University working for Dr John Archer who was working on violent crime in nineteenth-century Liverpool.[4] The researcher created the database to act as an index of relevant 'cases' for Archer's work. Random sampling had taken place to provide a range of valid data.

Understanding how data like this comes to be in a database is important because it is a very powerful demonstration for students of the ways in which evidence can be created

or manufactured and the different actors that play a direct role in mediating the final product. Legal structures excluded most of the cases of drunkenness and soliciting. As for the Irish element – unless one of the magistrates mentioned the nationality of the defendant it was not reported. If, on the other hand you wanted to search for Irish-heritage names in the database there would be plenty of choice.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission database

The Liverpool Crime database took a significant amount of time to compile. It is possible to construct databases relatively easily if the data has been already been compiled and this is certainly the case with the records held by the CWGC.[5] This enables all history departments to develop their own First or Second World War community history projects. Many history teachers will have used the CWGC records at one time or another to look up individual names of local service personnel who died during the First or Second World Wars. Over the past ten years the CWGC has improved the way the database can be searched. The first of these changes was the ability to search by cemetery. For school groups taking part in field visits to the Western Front or Normandy it meant it was possible to undertake investigative work in some of the cemeteries. Cemeteries which were attached to field dressing stations, casualty clearing stations or field hospitals are especially useful in this respect.

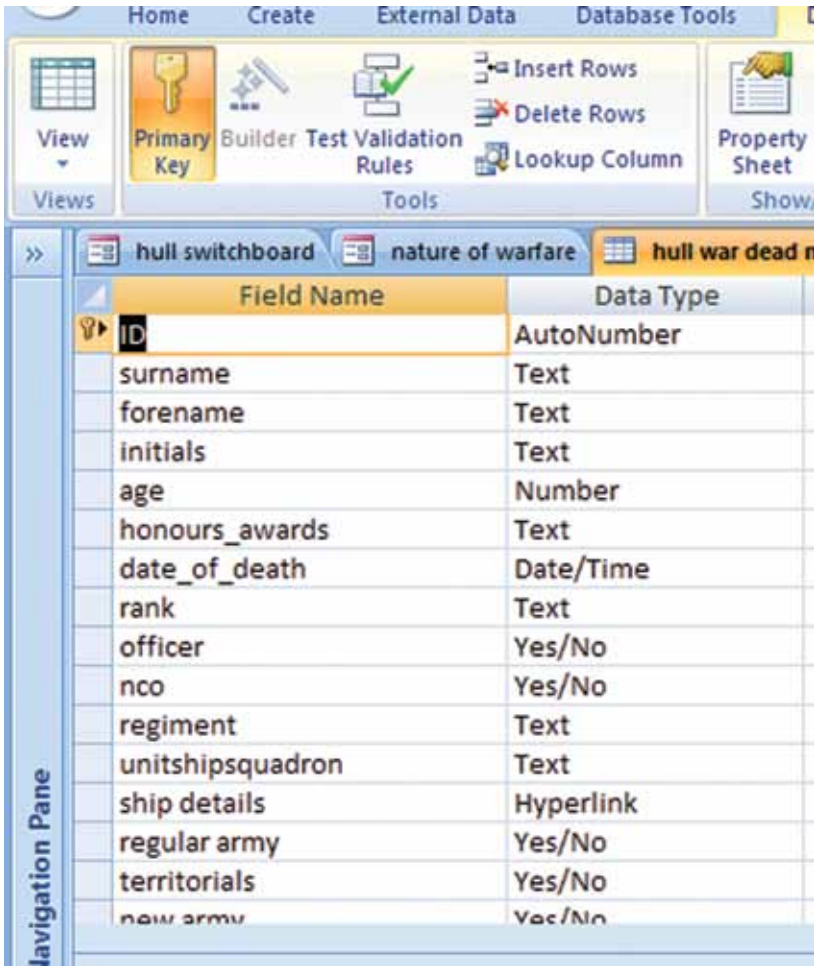
Creating a local database

With the CWGC database it is now possible to undertake a more focused search and to download the records of military casualties from individual communities. The CWGC's online search page has a field called 'Additional Information'. By entering the name of your town or city or suburb you will begin the process of creating your own database. The data downloads into an Excel file but can be quickly copied across into a Microsoft Access database format (see Figure 1 for instructions). This is where history teachers and pupils alike can begin to learn how databases and database searches work. Most of the following examples used are from the 'Hull War Dead 1914–1921' database which was designed for teachers and heritage professionals in Hull.[6]

The first technical problem is that the search criteria were very crude. The search for 'HULL' does produce every casualty who came from Hull, but the search doesn't discriminate. Instead wherever HULL appears across any of the records it will be included – so anyone called Hull is there; anyone living on a Hull Road is included; so are all the casualties from Solihull and Minshull. This could be an important lesson for pupils about search terms.

In the Hull database there are the records of over 4,500 First World War casualties and all had to be proof-read. There are a few short cuts which can also help. Using the basic SORT A-Z facility can make it relatively easy to find and delete all the servicemen named Hull, or casualties from SoliHULL and MinsHULL The largest task is reading through the 'Additional Information' field which mostly contains details of addresses and important family information. This task,

Figure 3: Details of fields in the Hull War Dead database



Provided by family	**Age / Additional information:** Usually family details e.g. son of/husband of – also might include address or other information family felt was important. On rare occasions families did not provide additional information and we don't know why – these fields are therefore blank
Data from War Office: Army/Navy/ Regimental Records etc.	**Family name/Initial/ Honours awarded/Date of death/Rank/Regiment/Unit – Ship – Squadron/Service number**
Data from War Graves Registration Unit (which became Imperial War Graves Commission and now CWGC)	**Country of burial/ Cemetery/Grave reference number**

Figure 4: Guide to querying a database in Microsoft Access

To investigate a single simple variable – such as deaths in a particular year – you should filter the database, by clicking on the dropdown menu at the head of each column. Filtering works if you are just highlighting information in one field. Anything more complex will need a query, which is a set of instructions which Access uses to select and display information. The information it produces is called a Record Set, and should be saved with a useful name.

To create a query:

1. Click the Query Design button. The Show Table window will automatically appear.
2. Choose the data table from which you wish to create the query. Double click it.
3. Select the fields which you wish to print in the query by double clicking the fields you want.
4. Save the query.
5. To view the query simply double click the name in the Queries column on the left.

however tedious, also gives an important feel for the detail and ideas of the kinds of searches you might want to carry out later, and it is also where you might come across the quirky details. Without this careful proof-reading I would not have come across this entry for Able Seaman George Robinson, who was only 22 when he died on 6 November 1918, the great-grandson of a gunner from HMS *Victory*, a veteran of Trafalgar. Also present in the database are the details of Hull's M.P, who held the honorary rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Yorkshire Regiment: Sir Mark Sykes is perhaps best remembered as the Middle East 'expert' who agreed on the division of Palestine, Syria and the Lebanon with his French counterpart François Picot. Hull is not necessarily unusual in terms of the oddities hidden in the database; every community will have similar unique detail.

Developing lines of enquiry

The idea of getting a 'feel for the data' is important. When proof-reading the raw information for the Hull database a number of key issues began to emerge. In the database these have been shaped into a number of lines of enquiry (see Figure 2). My work on databases for communities across England and Scotland has made it apparent that a number of common issues arise out of the evidence. Local examples really do represent larger national trends and patterns. The key issues can be grouped together in a number of linked or themed queries. These lines of enquiry are to some extent the obvious questions to ask and link neatly to equally obvious focus questions:

- When did the war begin to have an impact on my community?

  or

- What impact did the big battles of 1916 and 1917 have on my community?

Queries to the database can refine and highlight the relevant evidence but this requires more work: this might be arithmetical, working out simple percentages, or it might require deeper historical thinking, puzzling and explanation. In most communities the impact of the war in 1914 was slight, a fraction of total war losses, but in some towns and in some areas of larger cities the losses were more significant. It seems that poorer working-class communities suffered more losses in 1914. The challenge comes in trying to explain these patterns and trends. Each answer raises further questions and is excellent for developing the ability to reason, to explain and to come to a conclusion. In the Hull database, the evidence allowed four interesting conclusions to be drawn:

1. There was a significant number of casualties from the Royal Navy and from the Merchant Marine – hardly surprising in a port city (see Figure 2).
2. The same road names began to crop up again and again: there were two or three main arterial routes into Hull.
3. Local, often Pals', Regiments, showed large numbers of deaths associated with the dates of key engagements.
4. The number of soldiers from Hull who died and are buried in the town, suggests that there were one or more military hospitals around the city.

Making the database work harder

Having this deeper, almost intuitive understanding of the data enables you to understand what questions you want to ask of the data. The fields in the CWGC database are relatively straightforward. Figure 3 shows some detail of these fields. Some are described as YES/NO fields. These are additional fields which help to tag or categorise information in other fields. For example after the field RANK two YES/NO fields have been added: these enable the database to identify two groups of servicemen – Commissioned Officers and NCOs – and also by default 'ordinary' soldiers in the lower ranks. Another important tag allows the identification of men who were 'lost in action' and have no known grave. These are recorded in the Cemetery field as names recorded on a Memorial. These YES/NO fields provide a valuable device which enables the database to make the evidence work for you. At its most basic level, the database can simply be sorted to allow analysis of its evidence: you might also wish to query the database.

Figure 5: Hull war deaths by age. (4,255 casualties where age recorded)[7]

Age	Population in 1911 Census	Killed in War	% Of War Dead
15-19	12,177	615	14.4%
20-24	11,511	1,324	31%
25-29	11,609	938	22%
30-34	11,025	573	13.5%
35-39	9,688	390	9%
40-44	8,185	198	5%
44+	–	217	5.1%
War active population	64,135	7% War active population killed	

Figure 6: Comparison of casualties in different communities in the First World War

Community	Numerical losses	1911 population	Percentage losses
Otley	129	9,844	1.3%
Chorley	664	30,315	2.12%
Kidderminster	461	24,333	1.89%
Liverpool	11,784	746,421	1.6%
UK	886,939	45,400,000	1.95%

A query is simply a question you ask the database. There are two important aspects of a query:

1 The ability to set up search criteria within an individual field. This enables you to search for something very specific.

2 The ability to set up search criteria within an individual field, this enables you to search for something very specific

Queries therefore are invaluable at helping you to dig more deeply into the data. Queries also enable pupils to ask their own questions, which is very valuable for a history teacher. They are the small questions which feed into the overall 'big' question. See Figure 4 for more advice on querying databases.

A chronological line of enquiry: understanding the impact of the war on your community

So what could a database tell you about the impact of the war on your town? Immediately you might want to consider this question: 'When did the Great War begin to have an impact on your town?' The database effortlessly breaks down casualties year-by-year and month-by-month; using these queries turns the data into evidence. The evidence then needs to be described, analysed and explained perhaps as a progressive and coherent narrative. If the starting point is identifying the servicemen who died in successive years, then further questions might be suggested:

- When did the war really begin to have an impact on the community?

Digging deeper into these 'chronological' queries raises further questions:

- Who were the soldiers who were killed in 1914?
- Were they different from the soldiers of 1915 or 1916?

The chronological queries provide the most accessible way of breaking down the data and enable you to develop an informed overview of the impact of the war on a community. The evidence can be used to get your pupils to describe, analyse and then explain what was happening. A useful starting point is to get pupils to hypothesise: working from 1914 through to 1918 ask them to estimate the percentage of servicemen and women who died in each of the war years. This can be a very powerful tool and works with pupil preconceptions about the war. PGCE student teachers tend to overestimate the number of deaths in 1914, then peak in 1916 and remain at the same high level in 1917. PGCE student teachers know about the Somme and the Third Battle of Ypres but very little about the battles of 1918, which in Hull generated higher casualties than those of 1916. When the evidence overturns assumptions and preconceptions it inevitably leads to further questions about the nature of the war and the impact this had on communities. In most communities very few men were killed in 1914; indeed the war passed some communities by unscathed. This clearly reflects the nature of the British Regular Army – the small professional British Expeditionary Force that was quickly mobilised and sent to France and Belgium. This suggests a question: 'Who were the B.E.F?' In some small towns like Brechin in Scotland or Horsforth, today an outer suburb of Leeds, this is almost impossible to answer because the 1914 casualties were minimal. In large communities like Hull the impact is measurable.

Figure 7: Calculation of how many people were affected by the deaths of soldiers in the First World War

Calculation: N = 2y + y/2 + 5y + (y/2 × 5) + 20y + 3y

Where N is the number of people affected by each death, and y is the number of casualties. The family sizes suggested are reasonable averages for the time.

Formatting instructions: An arrow to each term indicating what it stands for:

2y = parents of the casualty

y/2 = half the casualties were married

5y = casualties had five siblings

(y/2 × 5) = married casualties had five children

20y = casualties' cousins, etc.

3y = casualties' immediate neighbours

Counting the cost of the war

The unremitting losses suffered by every community after 1916 demonstrates that the war had an impact but how can students be helped to measure or quantify or imagine the scale of loss? Again this is one area where the database provides the raw statistics, but when we observe that a community like Hull suffered 4,500 casualties (here defined as those who died on active service) or Liverpool over 11,000 what exactly does this mean? It's important here to get pupils thinking in a very different way – a simple comparative, arithmetical way; one that will make it possible to make meaningful comparisons between Liverpool or Hull and any other small town such as Otley, where there were around 130 casualties. There is one indispensable resource, which everyone across the UK can use: 1911 census data. The most useful site is 'A Portrait of Britain.'[8] This not only allows you see the 1911 population of your community but also breaks down the population into male and female and also by age. Working out simple percentages provides a simple way of working comparative data. This can be made more revealing when these losses are used alongside the age pyramid that the Vision of Britain site provides and can be seen for Hull in Figure 5.[9]

The headline figures are interesting – in a sense the pupils are working on the mathematics of grief and what they should slowly begin to appreciate as they work with these figures is the idea of the missing generation. There is a range of ways you might want to work with these statistics with a class. There is the ready challenge of getting pupils to work out the percentages for each year of the war in succession. It is an ideal way to begin to help pupils to understand mathematical ideas such as chance and probability. Perhaps when you teach the Black Death you casually point out that 50% of a class could be dead by the end of a year. In the First World War, the casualties would be largely confined to the young men in a community. It's not only shocking for the boys to work out that if they were in a particular age group they stood a 30% chance of getting killed but for the girls in the class it's equally important for them to realise that there would be 30% fewer men to go round after the war. My grandmother had five sisters all born at the end of the nineteenth century: three of them never married. It wasn't until I started working with these statistics that I worked out that the condition of my maiden aunts was caused by statistics rather than bad luck or bad looks.

While these statistics are drawn from the Hull casualty figures one key question that any statistician or historian ought to ask is this: 'how typical are the Hull losses? The story might be different in other places – Hull might just be a uniquely tragic story. Figure 6 reveals that Hull was not exceptional; proportionately the war had an equal impact on communities across the UK large and small. The figures are staggering but it can be difficult for young people to make that imaginative

Figure 8: Global line of enquiry

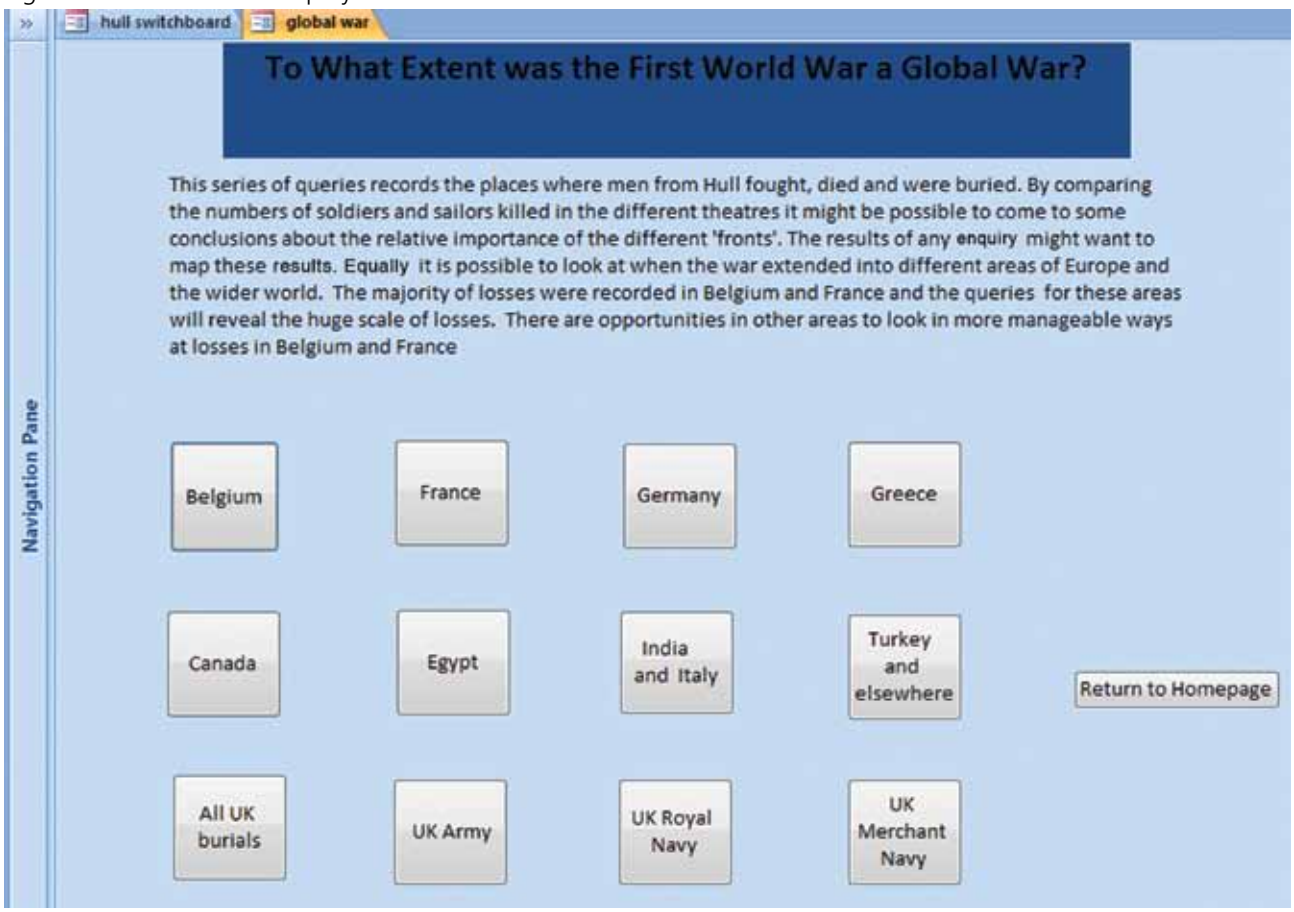


Figure 9: How significant was the war at sea?

Town /City	Total naval casualties	Royal Navy	Merchant Navy
Chorley	13	–	–
Droitwich	6	–	–
Fort William	3	–	–
Hull	956 (21%)	373 (8%)	583 (13%)
Liverpool	1,965 (17%)	615 (5.2%)	1,350 (11.4%)
Oswestry	8		

leap and try to understand what the scale of losses might mean. They are after all just numbers; very big numbers, they need personalising. It is unlikely to be possible to work with a real family, but it is possible to measure the impact on one family and then extend this into the entire community using statistical sampling and ideas about possible family size.

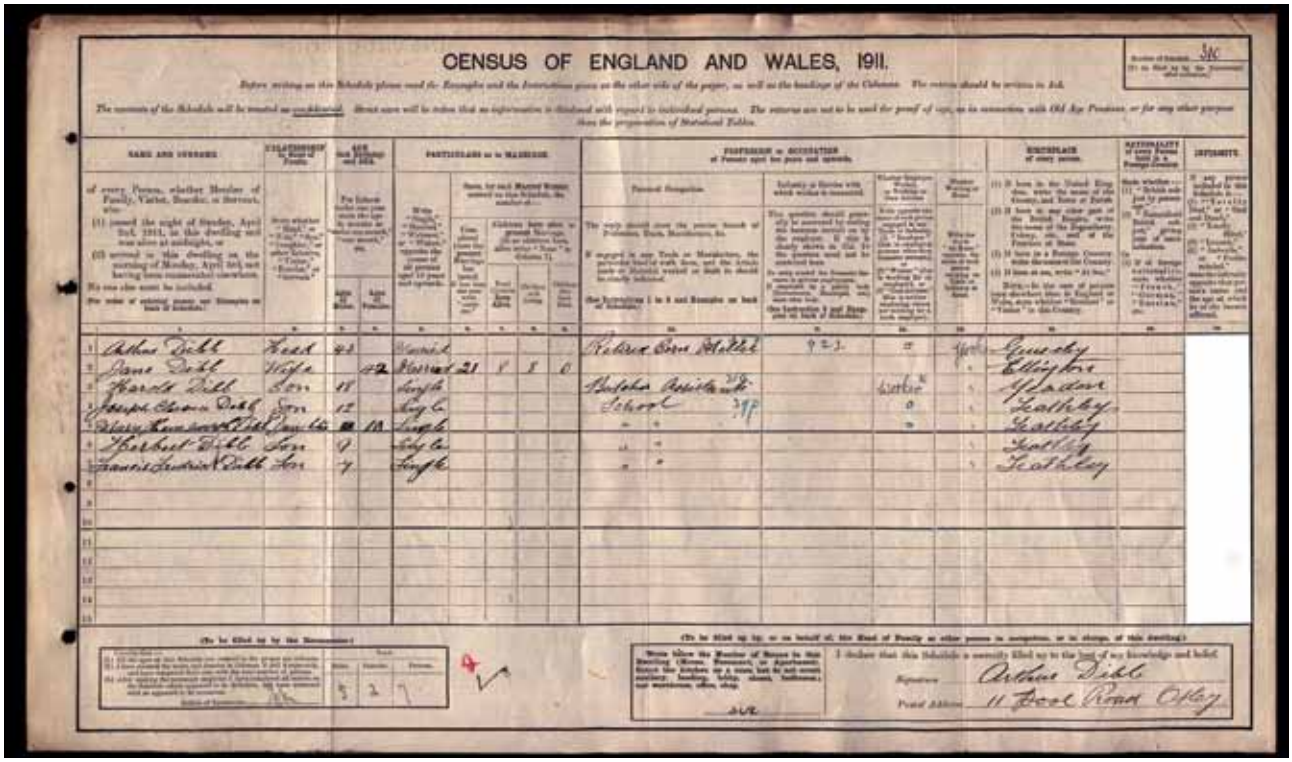
My discussions with a colleague in maths about this form of statistical modelling were interesting. He pointed out that there are too many variables to create an accurate model, but suggested that the calculation in Figure 7 embodies a reasonable assumption.

In reality all this is saying is that the death of every person killed in the First World War might intimately affect between 30 and 40 people.[10] If you were to apply this rule of thumb to every community it is possible to understand why the war had that deep impact upon post-war society. Assuming this multiplier is a credible way of measuring the impact of the war on Hull, then the 4,543 war deaths had an impact on 136,000 people: a staggering 49% of the population. When we look at our significance enquiries we often try to assess the impact of an event, to understand how deeply it affected a society. Again it is only since I have been working with community databases such as the Hull example that even at this late stage in my career have I really appreciated how the war affected my grandparents' generation.

Challenging stereotypical views of the First World War

The examples worked so far have simply looked at the basic chronology and demography. The information collated in the various queries is not an end-point. The queries are basic historical questions that can be asked of the data. Digging deeper into the evidence sometimes gives challenging results. This is an example drawn from my current hometown of Chorley, a few miles south of Preston in Lancashire. When war broke out in 1914 the town recruited a number of soldiers who formed two companies of the Accrington Pals – the 11th

Figure 10: Extract from the 1911 census return for the Dibb family, Otley


CENSUS OF ENGLAND AND WALES, 1911.

Dibb	Arthur	21	19/03/16	Gunner	Royal Field Artillery	Belgium
Dibb	Harold	24	26/06/17	Gunner	Royal Field Artillery	Belgium
Dibb	Joseph	19	12/10/17	Private	Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry	Belgium

Battalion of the East Lancashire Regiment. Over time the reputation of the Chorley men who served in the Accrington Pals has grown along with a number of misconceptions: some believe that most of the servicemen from Chorley were part of the Accrington Pals and that therefore the impact on the town of the first day of the Somme was especially devastating. Figure 6 shows the total casualties for Chorley – 664. These are broken down into the two key regiments: the 11th East Lancashire Regiment and then the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment and in particular the Territorial unit: the 4th Battalion. Clearly the losses suffered by the 4th Bn of the LNLR are heavier – about three times those of the Accrington Pals. There are still questions to be asked. What do the casualty figures of the 11th East Lancs for both 1916 and 1917 reveal about the effectiveness of Kitchener's New Army after the disastrous first day on the Somme?

Many local communities will have similar local regiments and similar local stories, and equally there could well be similar local myths. A community database could play a key part in developing a First World War Scheme of Work with a constant interplay between local and national perspectives. The Kaiser referred to the British Expeditionary Force as a 'contemptible little army' – to what extent then is this comment reflected in the casualty figures for 1914? By what stage in the war did Kitchener's New Army become effective? The ability to identify New Army Battalion numbers usually reveals that this was not until 1916. Working with the evidence in a local database students are in a position, initially to challenge some of the myths, misconceptions and lazy assumptions which surround local interpretation of the First World War. More challenging perhaps might be trying to explain a construction or an interpretation of history: 'Have histories of the Great War focused too much on 1 July 1916?' or perhaps 'Have histories of the Great War focused too much on the Pals' Battalions?' In both cases the database has thrown up interesting challenges to the accepted wisdom.

Comparing and contrasting

So far it's apparent that most communities seem to have had a broadly similar war experience. If you do decide to use the CWGC database to investigate your own community, it means that any conclusions you draw ought to be reasonable and valid. Most of the lines of enquiry we created focus on the war on the Western Front. Even the global war enquiry demonstrates that the numbers of servicemen involved in serving elsewhere in the world are small compared to the numbers who died on the Western Front (see Figure 9). In this respect the database will probably reflect the way the First World War is taught.

You might also think that your own community database is not very much help when it comes to the awkward lesson on the war at sea. There will be some naval casualties, but not many. The relatively few naval casualties in most communities simply provide interesting but isolated examples and perhaps this is reflected in the way that the war at sea is dealt with in many schemes of work. A one-off lesson that looks at the U-boat war links it to rationing and the Home Front. As for any set-piece battle perhaps Jutland is given limited attention. The picture is very different if you are working with the

Figure 11: Ford's enquiry signpost applied to databases

Enquiry signpost	Use with databases
Asking questions	Formulating a broad or general query, possibly based on a hypothesis
Suggesting answers	Working with the results of the query, developing an explanation which might challenge a hypothesis, developing a tentative explanation
Refining	Devising further queries, possibly to detect trends or patterns or working with the initial query to narrow or pin down ideas
Supporting with evidence	Using conclusions from the query or queries to develop an argument or linking the results of the query to wider contexts
Communicating certainty (or uncertainty)	Recognising that the database evidence might provide definitive answers, or that conclusions might be tentative, or untypical

records from coastal communities or even larger port cities like Hull or Liverpool. Figure 9 demonstrates this quite markedly. The significance of the war at sea clearly depended upon where you lived. In communities like Liverpool and Hull maritime casualties were very significant. This is a way of demonstrating that the war at sea was much more than the Battle of Jutland. Figure 9 shows that the real cost of the war at sea was paid by servicemen and women in the Merchant Marine – again this puts into some kind of perspective the impact of the war against the U-boats. When this is taught it is inevitably in terms of the effects on food supplies and rationing and hardly a thought is given to the mariners who died in the convoys.

If you want to teach the war at sea in a more revealing way, you can just draw down this information from the CWGC records. Try this as a focus question: 'Why did the sinking of the *Lusitania* lead to anti-German riots in Liverpool?'

To search for *Lusitania* casualties on the CWGC 'Find War Dead' page simply check the First World War and Merchant Navy options and in the Date of Death field use the 'starting' and 'ending' parameters: 7 May 1915 to 8 May 1915. This search will provide the names of the crew who were part of the Merchant Navy. There are any number of ways in which you may want to work with the evidence in this data-set – it is a small enough sample to work with in Excel but also large enough to merit being copied into Access format. This might be one relatively straightforward way in which your lesson(s) on the War at Sea could be made more challenging and engaging.

Finally what can make these links even more powerful is the ability to connect details from the CWGC records with 1911 census reports. Figure 10 provides an example – the Dibb family was one of those which lost more than one son in the First World War. This might work as a longer-term venture, either as a 'history club' project or as a more ambitious collaborative project between schools. Where families have provided personal details, particularly addresses, for the CWGC records these can be linked to 1911 census returns with the potential to produce visual geographical and chronological data about the impact of the war. The census returns also provide information about employment with the possibility of developing social and economic profiles of the war dead from a local community.

Conclusions

A local database could have the potential to change the way a First World War scheme of work or even a First World War field visit is structured, enabling the continuous interplay between local, national and international history. Any database, because of its interrogative nature, supports and develops the process of historical enquiry.

Ford's Enquiry Signpost is almost built for database work (see Figure 11).[11] Given that a database can encourage students to devise their own queries, it ought to be possible or desirable to help students model their thinking. The framing of queries is a very methodical, almost scientific, process and it might be worth reflecting on the following issues:

- Why do you want to ask that particular question?
- What do you think the results might look like?

Once the results are 'in' it is then the time to ask further questions.

- Are the results as you expected?
- Are there new questions to ask?
- Do you need to narrow your search?

In a more general context the database can be used to challenge some of those stereotypical lessons on trench warfare – the mud, the cold, the lice, trench foot. Winter was not a pleasant time to be in a front-line trench but the database allows students to work out answers to the following question: 'When was the most dangerous time of the year

Figure 12: Further ideas for using databases

Search terms:

>	Greater than
<	Less than
>=	Greater than or Equal to
<=	Less than or Equal To
AND	Could be used for linking locations (a number of street names) or occupations e.g. bricklayer and stonemason.
BETWEEN	Can be used with date entries
NOT	If you wish to exclude a certain category e.g. cases not tried by a particular magistrate: NOT "Mansfield"

Wildcards:

Symbol	Description	Example
*	Matches multiple missing characters. It can be used as the first or last character in the character string.	wh* finds wh, what, white, and why
?	Matches any single alphabetic character.	b?ll finds ball, bell, bill, boll and bull
[ ]	Matches any given character within the brackets.	b[ae]ll finds ball and bell but not bill, boll or bull
!	Matches any character not in the brackets.	b[!ae]ll finds bill, boll and bull but not ball or bell
-	Matches any one of a range of characters. You must specify the range in ascending order (A to Z, not Z to A).	b[a-c]d finds bad, bbd, and bcd
#	Matches any single numeric character.	1#3 finds 103, 113, and 123

to be on the Western Front?' Fatalities dropped noticeably in December and January and were at the highest in the summer months. Once the database has helped students to notice this, the history comes through trying to explain these findings. On another level one then might ask the more complex question – why do soldiers' accounts of the war on the Western Front focus so much on conditions in front-line trenches? The engaging aspect of database work like this is that relatively simple questions only provide answers which provoke more searching and complex questions. The scope is not exactly limitless but the opportunities are there for a great deal of original and challenging history.

REFERENCES

[1] This database is accessible to teachers in Hull and North Lincolnshire, and was created for an event earlier this year which was run by Hull Museums and Galleries.

[2] The author and editors gratefully acknowledge the permission of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to use these data.

[3] *Liverpool Echo* (2011) www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/liverpool-mercury-born-1811-3369215, retrieved 13 August 2015

[4] Archer, J. (2011) *The Monster Evil: policing and violence in Victorian Liverpool*, Liverpool University Press

[5] See www.cwgc.org

[6] See www.mylearning.org/joiningupthehumberww1/

[7] The data in this Figure are taken from the Hull database and the Vision of Britain site, www.visionofbritain.org.uk/, retrieved 12 August 2015.

[8] GB Historical GIS/University of Portsmouth (2009-2014) *A Vision of Britain through Time: Hull*, www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10136295/cube/TOT_POP, retrieved 12 August 2015.

[9] GB Historical GIS/University of Portsmouth (2009-2014) *A Vision of Britain through Time: Hull*, www.visionofbritain.org.uk/unit/10136295/cube/AGESEX_95UP, retrieved 12 August 2015.

[10] There is a problem here of 'unique-affectedness' – which is the assumption that each of these deaths affects 30 or 40 *different* people. This calculation remains reasonable as it is based on immediate family and immediate neighbours. Omitting other social relationships – membership of sports and social clubs, school classes, workplaces – balances the calculation.

[11] Ford, A. (2014) 'Setting us free? Building meaningful models of progression for a 'post-levels' world' in *Teaching History, 157, Assessment Edition.*

Copyright of Teaching History is the property of Historical Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.