

### 3 Sites of memory

*Keir Reeves*

This chapter assesses contemporary presentations of key historical sites, often typified by their commemorative significance, with an emphasis on contested and ‘difficult’ heritage locations. Such sites are often referred to as *lieux de mémoire* (‘memory places’) – a phrase which came to prominence in the 1990s through the work led by the French historian Pierre Nora. These sites are defined, Nora argues, by their complexity: ‘At once natural and artificial, simple and ambiguous, concrete and abstract, they are *lieux* – places, sites, causes – in three senses – material, symbolic and functional’ (Nora 1996: 14). Such sites of memory are important to historians because they represent the enduring physical places where the past is remembered, commemorated and constructed in the present day. Nora’s concept is useful because it brings to the fore the importance of particular places in the collective memory of nations and social groups. For field-based historians and those interested in the public presentation of heritage, a particularly appealing aspect of the concept of *lieux de mémoire* is that it calls for an evaluation of memory sites that blends first-hand experience and scholarly understandings: the history associated with the site, and its official presentation, must be interpreted alongside the reception of the site by the visiting public. Accordingly, sites of memory are touchstones for the community (and historians) to connect with the past through a connection with place. These *lieux de mémoire* are, in effect, heritage places of encounter between present-day public and scholarly agendas, where meaningful experience emerges (or perhaps fails to emerge) through that encounter.

For Nora ‘[l]ieux de mémoire are there because there are no longer any *milieux de mémoire*, settings in which memory is a real part of everyday experience’ (Nora 1996: 1). Nora’s work forms part of the *nouvelle histoire* (new history) approach in France, which emphasizes the significance of cultural history and is linked to the influential Annales School of historiography. Along with the medievalist Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Nora is the best-known exponent of the *nouvelle histoire*. Nora was the director of *Les Lieux de Mémoire* project, a vast collaborative project, the outcomes of which were published in French in seven volumes between 1984 and 1992. In English, Nora’s introductory essay on the concept first appeared in the journal *Representations* in 1989, followed by a broad selection of essays from the project in the three-volume *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past* (1996–8), with further essays appearing in *Rethinking France*:

*Les Lieux de Mémoire* (2001–10). A massive undertaking comprising contributions from well over one hundred influential French scholars, these volumes focused on the memories of the French nation-state as well as on the national character of France itself. For Nora these memories were found in sites that were physical locations, in symbolic emblems such as national flags, as well as in cultural practices such as national holidays (Nora 1989: 19).

For the purposes of this chapter, the idea of sites of memory is used as a conceptual tool to discuss global history. In doing so it is important to emphasize that the *Realms of Memory* project was specifically written as major longitudinal study of French history and society and developed out of the particular context of historical writing in and about that country in the mid-1980s and early 1990s. Nora and his contributors examined how key sites and practices embodied the cultural memories of the French nation, were associated in the didactic transmission of those memories, and had the ability to provoke emotional affect among the French about their collective past. These memorial sites were regarded as increasingly important in late twentieth-century French society as they appeared to embody national memory at a time when environments of real memory – *milieus de mémoire* – had faded away or completely disappeared. Nora very specifically identifies the 1970s – shortly before the *lieux de mémoire* project was conceived – as the key period when authentic collective memory died out in France, to be replaced by the didactic ‘patrimonial’ memory associated with these sites (Nora 2001: xi–xii; Schwarz 2010: 48–58). His project has been widely critiqued as representing a nostalgic desire for a coherent sense of French nationhood, and failing to embrace a more social history-oriented and pluralistic reading of French history. However, the concept of *lieux de mémoire* remains a potent conceptual tool for historians considering global sites of memory. Perhaps the abiding paradox of Nora’s work is that while it was not intended as a patriotic celebration, but rather sought to explain sites of memory as active forces in French society, when read from a twenty-first-century global perspective the project *itself* has become something of a *lieu de mémoire*: a monument to a particular approach at a particular time.

For cultural historians and human geographers Nora’s concept of *lieux de mémoire* is now a key reference point when discussing memory and commemoration, ranging far beyond the parameters of his original project. Appraising Nora as a case in point, Søren Kolstrup argues that sites of memory ‘are crossroads. They are the points where space and time meet memory’ (Kolstrup 1999: 115). Nora’s central argument can readily be applied more broadly: according to David Morley and Kevin Robins, it is a symptom of our globalized era that ‘with our lack of memory, we have to be content with *lieux de mémoire*, places which remind us of the past, of a (broken) memory’ (Morley and Robins 1996: 87). The legacy (embraced or contested) of Nora’s historical concept of *lieux de mémoire* is extensive when thinking about the significance of places and the meanings ascribed to sites and landscapes of memory and commemoration. Accordingly, Nora’s influential work remains an ideal departure point for a discussion of historical sites of memory across the globe.

The rise of the academic field of memory studies has prompted the widespread observation that ‘since the last decades of the twentieth century, Western Europe and North America have been living through a “memory boom”’ (Blacker et al. 2013: 1). This observation is reinforced by the parallel surge in new historical museums opening across the world during the past three decades. Historian Jay Winter has observed that this trend is ‘also a reflection of another facet of the development of the “memory business”’ (Winter 1997; see also Fedor 2015). Although Nora explicitly emphasized French national memory, much of the historical research about *lieux de mémoire* is intimately associated with war remembrance across the world, particularly in relation to the First and Second World Wars (Frank Bongiorno, for instance, provides a close reading of Gallipoli in Turkey, a key site of First World War memory and a contested touchstone for Australian identity, elsewhere in this book). However, in this chapter the emphasis is on recent major commemorations at site-specific places across the globe. Global comparison shows that many sites of memory share similar remembrance narratives that have regional, national and international significance. Often natural features at sites of memory accentuate visitor responses to the past and augment the impact on visitors of places that are inextricably linked to tragedy and horror. Sites such as the Sari Club in the resort of Kuta on the Indonesian island of Bali, where terrorist bombings killed over 200 people in October 2002, or the ‘Killing Fields’ at Choeung Ek in Cambodia, recalling the extermination of more than a million people by the Khmer Rouge regime in the late 1970s, are indicative examples of what Maria Tumarkin (2005) has termed ‘traumascape’. Often these are sites associated with war or terrorism, but sites of memory can also be associated with other events more broadly termed ‘difficult heritage’ (Logan and Reeves 2009: 1–7). Unsurprisingly, the increasing attention to commemoration during the ‘memory boom’ since the 1990s has occurred simultaneously with an increased scholarly interest in landscape, ‘stressing its role as both material and discursive mediator of cultural values’ (Wylie 2007: 191).

Part of the appeal of sites of memory is that they often take on a symbolic life of their own. This is a process whereby sites associated with key historical events become heritage constructions of the past in the present day, sometimes in unanticipated and even unruly ways. William Logan and Laurajane Smith have more broadly noted the dualistic way that heritage is ‘used in positive ways to give a sense of community to disparate groups and individuals or to create jobs’ and also harnessed by governments ‘in less benign ways to reshape public attitudes’ (Smith and Logan 2008). Accordingly, the politics of site management and community identity directly influence the cultural marking and commemoration that have occurred. Or to put it bluntly, *history* is the study of what occurred in the past whereas *heritage* (often the dominant determinant of significance at sites of memory) is the perception of the past as conveyed in the present day.

This has particularly been the case over the centenary of the First World War, during which the full array of resources by former combatant nations has been deployed to commemorate key historical themes of the conflict as determined by those states. If we accept the assertion that people and heritage are relationally

constituted then it follows that communities where war has occurred are inextricably linked to conflict sites. This is the premise for examining key sites of memory in the context of history, memory and public life. Many such sites spring to mind in this regard, and invite comparison – for instance the Hiroshima Peace Memorial in Japan that includes the 1997 UNESCO listed Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Dome (Logan and Reeves 2009: 3), the Changi Museum on the grounds of the former Allied prisoner of war camp in Singapore (Twomey 2007), and the sombre National Memorial Arboretum near Birmingham in Staffordshire, opened in 2001 as a site of remembrance for the armed and civil service personnel of the United Kingdom. Far from being fixed, unified or predictable, war memory (so often associated with sites of memory and commemoration) has often been described as fluid. Many scholars of commemoration have also called for a more dynamic conceptualization of remembering and forgetting also noting that the memory of war is subjective and selective, revealing a commemorative vocabulary that often conceals as much as it remembers (Thomson 1994; Sturken 1997; Hoskins and O’Loughlin 2007; Connerton 1989).

Landscape in itself can be described as ‘the last witness’ of conflicts (Stichelbaut and Cowley 2016: 3–4). Indeed for younger generations in particular the initial confrontation with the past through site visitation can be an emotional experience. Martin Gegner and Bart Ziino suggest that such heritage sites are now central to how past wars are interpreted in the present (Gegner and Ziino 2012, 2). This observation is consistent with Winter’s assertion that remembrance, history and memory are ‘braided together in the public domain’ (Winter 2006: 6), and with other recent discussions regarding how sites of memory and the contested of their meaning reinforce the interplay between history, heritage, remembrance and specific locations (Bird et al. 2016: 6–7). There is therefore a need to consider the



*Figure 3.1* Western Front, World War One Hill Sixty situated near Ypres.  
Photograph courtesy of the author, 2013.

experiential physical geography of war heritage pilgrimage sites in conjunction with their historical associations. The sense of place and the connectedness to the topography drives much of the motivation for visiting key sites of memory.

A number of such sites deserve mention here. At Gallipoli, for instance, the Chunuk Bair New Zealand Memorial is the key historical marker for the Wellington Brigade, standing at the highpoint reached by the New Zealander soldiers who occupied the summit on 8 May 1915 (Pugsley 2008). The memorial features a vertical slit through which the sun shines on 8 May each year as a commemorative reminder. Elsewhere, the sands of Juno Beach in France (associated with the D-Day Normandy landings during the Second World War) serve as a rallying destination for those with an interest in Canadians at war. Here the Canadian Army achieved a difficult, albeit highly successful, beach landing (in the process sustaining many casualties) on 6 June 1944. Similarly, the Vieng Xay cave complex situated near Xam Neua in Houphan Province of northeastern Laos was the heavily bombed redoubt of the Pathet Laos (the Laos Communist Party) during the Vietnam War, and is now a site of memory for locals and tourists alike. Vieng Xay also serves as symbolic reminder of the emergence of the modern communist state of Laos (Stuart-Fox 1997). Pearl Harbor in Hawai'i, meanwhile, remains a site of memory for Americans and serves as an historical reminder of this unprovoked surprise attack by Japan on the American homeland on 7 December 1941, and the nation's consequential loss of isolationist innocence. Similarly, the undulating ground of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania – the site of the bloodiest battle of the American Civil War, which was also the most crucial victory of the northern Union over the southern Confederate forces – remains a touchstone of the social divisions and immense loss of life associated with this four-year conflict (1861–5). There are many other global examples, including the Ground Zero site at the former World Trade Center in New York and the still fluid *lieux de mémoire* in Paris, Brussels and London associated with more recent terrorist attacks.

It is important to note that for many sites of memory there is an associated traumatic memory for some of those who visit them. This usually surrounds the loss of a relative in conflict and the family memories that run across generations. The most influential articulation of this idea is Marianne Hirsch's notion of 'post-memory', a form of remembrance whereby 'those family stories . . . have come to assume a life of their own' (Hirsch 2008, 103, 2012: 29–54). Understanding this involves historians employing non-conventional techniques such as the 'act of gathering bits and pieces of the past, and joining them together in public', in the process deliberately entering the public domain to capture the complexities of what Jay Winter and Edward Sivan have called 'collective remembrance' (Winter and Sivan 1999: 6). A key example is the use of cinema to frame narratives around historical memory of war. Collective remembrance can also be explored through the careful investigation of sites of memory, consideration of the role of museums, and attention to the increasingly digital memories associated both with sites and museums.

As historian John Gillis (1996: 41–60) has observed, memory is as central to modern politics as politics is central to modern memory. The idea of *contested*

memory provides one way of explaining interpretations of the past and management of these sites in the present. Academic historians' narratives can sometimes compete with each other, and with interventions by politicians and others, to reframe conflicts in the context of shared experience. There is often particular sensitivity over the pace and manner in which sites of conflict over time become increasingly associated with peace and reconciliation. In practical terms this means that heritage management and interpretation strategies for former sites of imprisonment, for example, are often intricately linked with political concerns that revolve around culturally sensitive matters. Examples include contested interpretations of the concentration camp at Auschwitz-Birkenau, or of the role of Pacific Islanders in the Pacific theatre of war during the Second World War (White 1995). Government policies are also often crucial in the decision-making processes that determine the official significance of particularly sensitive sites, and how they are historically interpreted for heritage tourists.

Processes of 'transcendence' can also attach to memory sites. Transcendence occurs when a site, or a place, assumes a level of significance out of proportion with actual events associated with it. This occurs when a place becomes experienced as an emotional metaphor, exemplar or intensified quintessence of a broader human emotion, experience or aspiration. A sense of unfamiliarity can be associated with this process (which shares some interesting parallels with Hirsch's notion of postmemory). Robben Island off the coast of Cape Town for instance – the site where Nelson Mandela and other African National Congress activists were imprisoned – is now almost universally understood as a reviled former bastion of the oppressive apartheid regime. Its transformation into a site of resistance memory mirrors the dramatic changes that have occurred in South African society since 1990. One of his key roles of the site in its post-apartheid incarnation as a site of memory has been to record the memories of former prisoners, and a key objective of this oral history project has been to preserve the memory of the freedom struggle. Former prisoners working at the site as guides for visitors suggested the possibility that this activity might offer for them some form of therapeutic benefit; this suggestion, though, was itself therapeutic for visitors to the site seeking a positive story of forward progress, even if it was seldom the reality for their guides (Colvin 2003). This was a trend Myra Shackley observed as early as 1999, commenting that 'commodification of the island and its tragic past threatens to "trivialise the experience"' (Shackley 1999: 361). A similar process of contested remembering and memorialization takes place at many other global sites of memory.

### **Reading sites of memory**

Arguably there is a national, often government- and community-driven, need for examples of transcendence. Wartime examples are manifold – to paraphrase historian Ken Inglis's observation, there are thousands of such 'sacred places' in Australia alone (Inglis 1999). Shrines; war memorials; battle sites; cemeteries: the list is long. Indeed, all are inextricably associated with personal and collective

commitment, with sacrifice, and with death. So why is it that some monuments are more resonant than others, capturing an imagination – or longing – that spans generations, imbued not only with the efforts and sacrifice at a particular time or place, but also with the bitter knowledge and lost aspirations of entire conflicts? Paradoxically the act of remembrance and memorialization of major wartime conflicts at key sites is also a process of *forgetting* the events of other wartime conflicts and locations that are no longer observed, to some extent because they are displaced by these other, more compelling memories. How else do we explain and attribute varying degrees of significance to different conflicts, all of which are associated with death? A key example here is the increasing amount of Australian war heritage visitation to the remote regional city of Darwin, fuelled by the powerful lingering memories of the Japanese bombing of Australia's northern outpost during a mid-February morning in 1942 (Roberts and Young 2008). Heavy bombers escorted by Zero fighters left some 243 people dead and several hundred more were wounded as the Japanese sought to neutralize Darwin as part of their preparation to invade the nearby Southeast Asian island of Timor (in the process cutting Australia off from its allies as part of its wider strategy of war in the Pacific). While casualties were heavy, the massive attack also destroyed many civil and military buildings.

The legacy of the bombing remains powerful throughout Australia's Northern Territory. Each year on Anzac Day (25 April) in the early hours of the morning a convoy of cars travels to the Adelaide River war cemetery – an isolated community one hour's drive to the south of Darwin – where a crowd of approximately two thousand people gather. Equally large crowds gather on the Esplanade, and throughout Bicentennial Park, in Darwin, facing the direction from where the Japanese aircraft would have appeared over the horizon on the day of the attack. At Adelaide River, like Darwin, the key historical point of reference in war commemoration and pilgrimage remains the bombing. It serves as an enduring reminder that Australia was attacked and also that the city of Darwin was largely destroyed (*Age*, 20 February 1942). The potency of the bombing legacy at Adelaide River is particularly powerful as the memorialization is concentrated upon a war cemetery and on those who died.

The main significance of the bombing of Darwin to those visiting it as a Second World War destination is not only the universal theme of remembering the dead but also the isolated situation in which Australia found itself in during 1942. More subtly, other themes have emerged, highlighting how the passing of time tends to enable an increased emphasis on the message of peace and greater willingness to present alternative viewpoints. Today, Darwin is a site of memory for more than one community. It is a pilgrimage destination for American and Japanese war heritage pilgrims as well as a destination for Australians. The Japanese visitors follow their own war heritage trails and their presence reminds us that the process of commemoration is relevant for both aggressors and victims, and for both victors and losers.

This argument about sense of place in Darwin (and other war pilgrimage sites) can be understood on different levels. Inglis's pioneering discussion of place

concentrated on the location of memorial sites within towns and designated precincts, and on how they reminded people not only of war but also shaped their perception of the place they were visiting. For Darwin the bombing not only serves as a historical marker for the war but also as a reminder in the present day of the enduring existence of the city itself – a city situated at such a geographical remove from the rest of the Australian population that its viability has not always been certain. When the bombing is invoked, thoughts turn not only to death and to the real or imagined invasion of Australia, but also to thoughts of Darwin as an enduring place that should be, and is, remembered by the rest of the Australian community in the present day as a place of destruction and resilience. In a sense, then, the bombing serves as a historical memory that reminds the wider Australian community of Darwin's continuing relevance as the remote northern outpost of the nation in the present day. Moreover the legacy of the bombing and its associated sites can also be viewed in the layout of the Cenotaph and other sites of commemoration situated on the Esplanade and other commemorative and memorial structures located throughout the park. Perhaps in part due to the organic nature of the process of memorialization and remembrance in Darwin there has not been criticism from the local community regarding potential disfranchisement from their history and the rewriting of that history as heritage.

Mathematics may be an exact science but when considering war memory and its commemoration the act of analysing and contextualizing numbers is inevitably to some extent subjective, as there are no straightforward comparative measures of suffering or loss. The classical granite and sandstone memorial erected in Melbourne by members of the Fifth Contingent, Victorian Mounted Rifles to their comrades who fell in the service of the British Empire in South Africa during the 1899–1902 conflict there displays 54 names of Victorian Mounted Rifles casualties. The memorial is a thing of elegance, designed by the Melbourne architect G. de Lacey Evans. But despite its prominent location it is a forlorn memorial, overlooked by passing commuters. By way of contrast, the Darwin Cenotaph, situated on the Esplanade in the designated government precinct, lists just 52 casualties of the First World War, two fewer than the Victorian Mounted Rifles memorial. On Anzac Day, Melbourne's marching thousands pass the 54 names on the Victorian Mounted Rifle's memorial with barely a glance. Yet in Darwin thousands regularly close on the Cenotaph, with its 52 names, at the dawn service and later as the prelude to the Anzac Day march, honouring their sacrifice.

Comparing the Boer War Cenotaph in Melbourne with Darwin's Second World War commemoration highlights the wider point that the manner in which these deaths are remembered is to a large extent determined by the place where they occurred. The experience of the Second World War, particularly the bombing, is lodged deeply in the public memory of the Darwin community. Over time, Australian memory practices have come to emphasize the role of Darwin in national myth and legend as the place where the Australian mainland was attacked and the Asia-Pacific theatre of the Second World War arrived on the nation's doorstep. In Darwin, various conflicts over time have been rolled into one homogenized Anzac memory. These are the powerful drivers of the significance



Figure 3.2 Anzac Day crowds surrounding the Cenotaph on the Esplanade, Darwin, 2011. Photograph courtesy of the author, 2011.

of Darwin as a pilgrimage destination and as a touchstone for Australians' understanding of that conflict in the present day.

Since the 1980s, memory work about war has been methodologically driven by a desire to better understand the traumatic conflicts of the twentieth century. This scholarship evaluates the ways in which the public presentation of key sites, and the emotional *raison d'être* for travelling to them, has shifted over time, in relation both to the perceived historical meaning and the political significance of these sites. In a sense this trend echoes Roland Barthes' observation that 'perhaps we have an invincible resistance to believing in the past, in History, except in the form of a myth' (Barthes 1981: 87–88). In understanding the impress of war during the twentieth century it is necessary for historians and others to engage with the recent historiographical commemoration of war. This process necessarily considers the intangible heritage associated with the process of remembering major conflicts such as the First and Second World Wars.

Examples of commemorative events such as the annual services at the British National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire provide one way of providing present day context for thinking about contested or contrasting interpretations of sites of memory. For some these events are poignant commemorations of war which bring the nation together, while for others they are seen at worst as militaristic and nationalistic ceremonies that implicitly revel in the tragedy and loss associated with war. Commemorative events at locations such as the Staffordshire Arboretum can be interpreted as aiming to establish a form of 'fictive kinship'



*Figure 3.3* States of Jersey, Liberation Day, 2013. Photograph courtesy of the author, 2013.

among those who attend them. This describes the bond between ‘a collective of individuals who have come together to memorialize and commemorate’, among whom a sense of kinship is formed, ‘because they share a common experience, either as next of kin or as veteran comrades of those who were killed’, or because they enter into strong identification with those people (Winter 2006; Bird et al. 2016: 5). The challenge for sustained remembrance of war is not so much for those who were witnesses to events, such as comrades and next of kin, but instead ‘whether the commemorative ritual is adopted by the next generation’ or generations (Bird et al. 2016: 5).

Jersey Liberation Day in the British Channel Islands likewise serves as an exemplar of the potency of enduring historical narratives – in this case the experience of the German occupation and subsequent liberation during the Second World War – being reinforced in the present day at key sites of memory throughout the island. As I witnessed in 2013, the commemoration of liberation is a major production, with Union Jack flags being flown and the States of Jersey Flag being raised in the square now named Liberation Square, where the 1945 arrival of British forces is re-enacted on a massive scale in front of thousands of people. To an outsider such as myself the event had a Ruritanian flavour to it, with oranges and sweets distributed to the crowd by local Sea Scouts. For some scholars the obvious, and in many respects understandable, response would be to dismiss the whole show as state-sanctioned nostalgia and constructed history. I would suggest, however, that while this was indeed the case, there was also a heartfelt popular support for the event as a cultural memory of the Second World War, and that this sincere expression tells us a good deal that is valuable about popular consciousness. This example of British identity as mobilized through war

commemoration (in this case the liberation of St Helier from Nazi occupation) is also consistent with historian Jenny Macleod's broader discussion of Britishness and commemoration which highlights the key role of war memorials for articulations of regional and national identities in Britain (Macleod 2013).

While Darwin in Australia provided a single site for the pilgrimages and memories of different communities, Jersey has developed parallel, and potentially competing, sites of memory. Elsewhere, on the same day as the Liberation Square celebrations, a more sombre event was held at the island's crematorium. The location was chosen as it 'commemorated the 101 forced and slave workers who died in the island and were buried in this location during the Occupation' (Carr 2014: 218). There is a contested history and heritage associated with Jersey that reveals much about the politics of remembering and indeed the forgetting of the occupation (Carr 2014: 193–238). Jersey was caught up in the complex politics that surrounded the fate of those interned as prisoners of war by the Nazis in the Channel Islands. Those who suffered included thousands of locals, most of whom had committed no crime, and some who were deported, including Eastern European forced and slave labourers, Spanish freedom fighters, North Africans and Jews (Carr 2014: 252). At the commemorative ceremony I witnessed the poignancy of the occasion was clear; indeed, the father of one of the organizers had fought against fascism during the Spanish Civil War. Against this backdrop in the second decade of the twenty-first century, some 75 years after those events, it nonetheless made sense to watch an elderly Spaniard laying a wreath draped in a Spanish flag and then impulsively shouting 'Viva la Republica!' to the crowd. The implications of this for understanding Jersey as a site of memory is that the visceral connection to place, along with the associations of those who were witnesses to events there, underscores the significance of the site, and the power of the memory of the occupation to resonate with the community in the present day.

The relationship between history and the public presentation of heritage is not always easy, particularly in relation to wars and conflicts in the recent past. An example of a site of memory from a later conflict is Anlong Veng in North Western Cambodia on the Dângrêk escarpment, a town that is the location of a redoubt of the former Khmer Rouge and also the site of a 'house museum' for Ta Mok, a senior figure in Pol Pot's notorious regime, known as 'the butcher' for his brutality, and the person who ultimately overthrew Pol Pot in April 1998. For visitors to the site a pressing question when considering the heritage of the region is the place of the house museum as a heritage site at a time when the genocide in Cambodia, and its pressing social, economical and political legacy, remain only very inadequately addressed (Long and Reeves 2009). One research field visit to Anlong Veng led to the troubling discovery that the guides at the house were former child soldiers of the Khmer Rouge. Another guide at the site told Holocaust studies researcher Mark Baker that he 'liked [Ta Mok] because he and Pol Pot were the ones who defended our nation and tried to liberate it' (*Age*, 3 September 2003). Indeed, as Brendan Luyt has highlighted in relation to Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*, this site undoubtedly helps its visitors to



Figure 3.4 Ta Mok's House Museum, Anlong Veng, Cambodia. Photograph courtesy of the author, 2005.

remember the past – but whom does it help, and to remember what (Luyt 2015: 1956–7)? Sometimes when trying to commemorate a site associated with difficult heritage, such as the Cambodian genocide, the impulse to conserve the past can be construed as an affront to the memory of the victims. A contentious conclusion might be that some historic places are better forgotten than interpreted as sites of memory.

## Conclusion

Even when they are not read as nostalgic *lieux de mémoire*, physical sites remain central to popular and state-sanctioned memory. The processes of historical commemoration and remembrance (as well as forgetting or omission) are often best understood with regard to specific sites associated with conflict or otherwise 'difficult' heritage locations. In this chapter, a diverse range of historically significant places have been discussed, in order to suggest how sites of memory are meaningful both for historians and for the wider public. In closing it is worth re-emphasizing that the histories of sites of memory do not exist in a vacuum. The meanings attached to these places are constantly evolving, albeit not always in radically new ways, and the sites themselves sit within wider material and discursive landscapes that are also subject to change. These meanings are shaped by various

forces and constituencies, including government officials, scholars, professional and volunteer site interpreters, families of historical actors and visitors themselves, from the victorious and the defeated sides in these conflicts. These sites are situated within diverse physical contexts, for instance sometimes surrounded by older monuments or by competing sites of memory. Scholars seeking to understand these settings traverse these landscapes and reflect on what they see. An especially productive way to get to grips with the presence of the past in the present is to follow suit, making one's own first-hand observations and testing existing scholarship against what one encounters. As the great English historian R. H. Tawney once opined, 'good historians need strong boots'.

### Guide to further reading and online resources

Further reading on sites of memory should start with the work of Nora and his collaborators. Nora (1989) is the best place to start: this is based on his conceptual introduction to the *Lieux de mémoire* project. The essays in the two multi-volume translation series *Realms of Memory and Rethinking France* (both listed below) both cover a vast range of topics in French history, culture and topography, relating to all periods: readers should sample according to taste. For helpful discussions of Nora see Wood (1994), Carrier (2000) and Schwarz (2010).

On the memory and commemoration of sites of twentieth-century warfare, see Jager and Mitter (2007), Williams (2007), Winter (1995), and Sørensen and Dacia Viejo-Rose (2015). On trauma and 'difficult pasts' see Logan and Reeves (2009) and Tumarkin (2005). Laing and Frost (2017) provides an invaluable and wide range of recent essays on the relationship between travel, commemoration and sites of memory.

There are a number of online resources offering material relevant to the issues discussed in this chapter. A useful and wide-ranging comparative website on sites of memory is: [www.sites-of-memory.de](http://www.sites-of-memory.de).

On the commemoration of the bombing of Darwin: [www.defenceofdarwin.nt.gov.au](http://www.defenceofdarwin.nt.gov.au).

The Cambodian Killing Fields Museum: [www.killingfieldsmuseum.com](http://www.killingfieldsmuseum.com).

Genocide Watch (for more information about the Cambodian genocide, as well as on other atrocities): [www.genocidewatch.com](http://www.genocidewatch.com).

The UK National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire: [www.thenma.org.uk](http://www.thenma.org.uk).

### References

- Barthes, Roland (1981) *Camera Lucida*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Bird, Geoff, Keir Reeves and Birger Stichelbaut (2016) 'Introduction: Landscape, Commemoration and Heritage' in Keir Reeves, Geoffrey R. Bird, Laura James, Birger Stichelbaut and Jean Bourgeois (eds), *Battlefield Events Landscape, Commemoration and Heritage*. London: Routledge.
- Blacker, Uilleam Alexander Etkind and Julie Fedor (2013) *Memory and Theory in Eastern Europe*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Carr, Gilly (2014) 'The Politics of Memory on Liberation Day', in *Legacies of Occupation: Heritage, Memory and Archaeology in the Channel Islands*. London: Springer.
- Carrier, Peter (2000) 'Places, Politics and the Archiving of Contemporary Memory in Pierre Norra's *Les Lieux de Mémoire*', in Susannah Radstone (ed.), *Memory and Methodology*. New York: Berg.
- Colvin, Christopher (2003) "'Brothers and Sisters, Do Not Be Afraid of Me": Trauma, History and the Therapeutic Imagination in the New South Africa', in Katherine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (eds), *Memory, History, Nation: Contested Pasts*. New York: Routledge.
- Connerton, Paul (1989) *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fedor, Julie (2015) 'War Museums and Memory Wars in Contemporary Poland', in *Blackwell Companion to Heritage*. London: Blackwell.
- Gegner, Martin and Bart Ziino (2012) *Heritage and War*. London: Routledge.
- Gillis, John R. (1996) *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hirsch, Marianne (2008) 'The Generation of Postmemory', *Poetics Today* 29: 1.
- Hirsch, Marianne (2012) *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hoskins, Andrew, and Ben O'Loughlin (2007) *Television and Terror: Conflicting Times and the Crisis of News Discourse*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Inglis, Ken (1999) *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*. Carlton South: Miegunyah Press.
- Jager, Sheila Miyoshi, and Rana Mitter (2007) *Ruptured Histories: War, Memory, and the Post-Cold War in Asia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kolstrup, Søren (1999) 'Wings of Desire: Space, Memory and Identity', *O.V.A. Danish Journal of Film Studies* 8: 115–24.
- Laing, Jennifer and Warwick Frost (2017) *Commemorative Events: Memory, Identities, Conflict*. London: Routledge.
- Logan, William and Keir Reeves (eds) (2009) *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing With 'Difficult' Heritage*. London: Routledge.
- Long, Colin and Reeves, Keir (2009) 'Healing the Wounds: Heritage Practice at Toul Sleng and Choeng Ek, Cambodia', in *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing With 'Difficult' Heritage*. London: Routledge.
- Luyt, Brendan (2015) 'Wikipedia, Collective Memory, and the Vietnam War', *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 67(8) 1956–61.
- Macleod, Jenny (2013) 'Britishness and Commemoration: National Memorials to the First World War in Britain and Ireland', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 48(4) 647–5.
- Morley, David and Kevin Robins (1996) *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries*. London: Routledge.
- Nora, Pierre (1989) 'Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *Representations* 26: 7–24.
- Nora, Pierre (1996) *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. I: Conflicts and Divisions*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Nora, Pierre (1997) *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. II: Traditions*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Nora, Pierre (1998) *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past. III: Symbols*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Nora, Pierre (2001) 'General Introduction', in *Rethinking France I*: vii–xxii.
- Nora, Pierre (2001–10) *Rethinking France: Les lieux de mémoire*, 4 vols, trans. Mary Trouille and David P. Jordan. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pugsley, Christopher (1998) *Gallipoli: The New Zealand Story*. Auckland: Reed Publishing.
- Roberts, Julie and Martin Young (2008) 'Transience, Memory and Induced Amnesia: The Re-imagining of Darwin', *Journal of Australian Studies* 32(1) 51–62.
- Schwarz, Bill (2010) 'Memory, Temporality and Modernity: Les lieux de mémoire', in Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (eds), *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Shackley, Myra (2001) 'Potential Futures for Robben Island: Shrine, Museum or Theme Park?', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 7(4) 355–63
- Smith, Laurajane and William Logan (2008) 'Series Introduction', in Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa (eds), *Intangible Heritage*. London: Routledge, xii–xiii.
- Sørensen, Marie-Louise, and Dacia Viejo-Rose (eds) (2015) *War and Cultural Heritage: Biographies of Place*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stichelbaut, Birger and David Cowley (eds) (2016) *Conflict Landscapes and Archaeology from Above*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Stuart-Fox, Martin (1997) *A History of Laos*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Sturken, Marita (1997) *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Thomson, Alistair (1994) *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Tumarkin, Maria (2005) *Traumascapes*. Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Press.
- Twomey, Christina (2007) *Australia's Forgotten Prisoners: Civilians Interned by the Japanese in World War Two*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- White, Geoffrey M. (1995) 'World War II, Fifty Years After: Remembering Guadalcanal: National Identity and Transnational Memory-Making', *Public Culture*, 7(3) 529–55.
- Williams, Paul (2007) *Memorial Museums: The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities*. New York: Berg.
- Winter, Jay (1995) *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Winter, Jay (1997) Review of Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past. I: Conflicts and Divisions*. H-France, H-Net Reviews, [www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=1354](http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=1354).
- Winter, Jay (2006) *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Winter, Jay, and Edward Sivan (eds) (1999) *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Wood, Nancy (1994) 'Memory's Remains: Les Lieux de Mémoire', *History and Memory* 6: 123–49.
- Wylie, John (2007) *Landscape*. London: Routledge.