Museums as conflict zones: The Canadian War Museum and Bomber Command

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Abstract

This paper examines a recent controversy at the new Canadian War Museum over its exhibition on the Allied Bomber Offensive campaign in the Second World War. Although recent surveys of the public's attitudes towards museums suggest that the public both trusts museums to get the story right and thinks museums are good places to deal with controversial topics, in this case the Museum found itself under attack. In the end, despite generally positive reviews from historians called in to review the display, the Museum was forced to make changes after a Parliamentary sub-committee demanded it do so. The paper argues that the Museum's inability to withstand such intense pressure can be attributed to a number of factors, including its ambiguous nature as a war memorial museum.

Full Text:

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Some museums, such as the Royal Air Force Museum, focus on a specific branch of the British military, whilst others focus on telling the story of crucial military events and locations related to one war, like the Churchill War Rooms. Many of these London war museums are also free to visit. As well as war museums, London is also home to a number of war memorials, dedicated to the memory of those who gave their lives in service of their country. The memorial really puts into context the incredible loss of life of the war. Of the 125,000 men who served in Bomber Command, 55,573 of them lost their lives – nearly 50%! The sculpture, by Liam O’Connor, features seven men,
each representing a different role within Bomber Command. 7. Wellington Arch Area. The museum's website is here Bomber Command Museum of Canada and, because I'm a lazy SOB, I'll borrow a few paragraphs from the introduction contained on the site to give a brief history of how the museum came into being. The Nanton Lancaster Society was formed following the Town of Nanton's suggestion in the fall of 1985 that perhaps a group could be formed to, "take care of the Bomber" which had been on outside display for twenty-five years. At