



**UNESCO World Heritage Sites
as 'Ambassadors for Peace'**

Peter G Stone and David Brough



Cover image:

“A performance of Verdi’s ‘Defiant Requiem’ in the Cathedral,
the audience being addressed by a Holocaust survivor

© Durham Cathedral”

Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Preface	5
A Summary	6
B Recommendations	7
C The Issue	8
D Newcastle University’s World Heritage and Peace Initiative	
Initial Activities	11
E The UK Pilot Project	
Intended Project Aims, Objectives, and Outcomes	12
Review of Documentation and Policy	13
Interviews with Individual UK World Heritage Sites	14
Project Workshops 2022/2023	15
F Conclusions and Recommendations	21

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Without the active participation and commitment of the Sites, none of the following would have been possible.

The Report has been written by Prof. Peter Stone OBE, UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace¹, Newcastle University, UK, President, The Blue Shield², and David Brough³, an independent consultant.

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Disclaimers

Professor Peter Stone OBE is the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace at Newcastle University, UK, David Brough is an independent consultant. They are responsible for the content of this report and for opinions expressed therein.

The views contained in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of UNESCO, the UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC), or World Heritage UK (WHUK) or the individuals or organisations who have contributed to this report.

¹ <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/sacs/people/profile/peterstone.html>
<https://unesco.org.uk/unesco-chair-in-cultural-property-protection-and-peace-at-newcastle-university/>

² [Home – Blue Shield International \(theblueshield.org\)](https://www.theblueshield.org/)

³ <https://worldheritageuk.org/articles/world-heritage/world-heritage-peace/>

Preface

We are delighted to have supported in various ways the work of the UNESCO Chair team in Cultural Property Protection & Peace at Newcastle University, UK and in particular the focus of this publication, the project on UNESCO World Heritage Sites as ‘Ambassadors for Peace’.

We are particularly pleased that the Report is being jointly published by the UNESCO Chair at Newcastle together with the UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) and World Heritage UK (WHUK). Partnership is essential if we are to help achieve the *raison d’être* of UNESCO’s founding mission of building peace in the minds of men and women and for us all to play a small part in countering those who turn to armed conflict to settle political disputes.

The world is faced with long running, and new, conflicts that individually and collectively threaten world peace and perhaps, in extremis, the future of the human race. Armed conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, Myanmar, Palestine, the Sahel, Sudan, Ukraine, and Yemen and the Red Sea, to name but some, threaten the stability of whole regions, collectively causing tens if not hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths, bringing misery, starvation, and displacement to millions. In their own, particular ways, they threaten us all.

Given this escalation of armed conflict and marked deterioration in global security a discussion of the contribution cultural heritage, and in this instance in particular World Heritage Sites, can make to maintaining and /or establishing peaceful societies is more relevant today than ever. The ‘Ambassadors for Peace’ Project is not going to stop any of the conflicts mentioned above. But it can provide a small contribution to help build momentum towards the aspiration of peace. It is surely incumbent on us all to do what we can in our own small worlds to help to build the ideal of global peace in any way we can.

As a research institution the University is proud to have provided the resources, financial and staff, to have carried out this project. Such academic research is frequently condemned to dusty libraries if it is not contextualised within the real world, a context in this instance provided by the UKNC, WHUK, and the individual World Heritage Sites who worked with us. This partnership has been a first step that we hope will lead to a similar international project, and eventually, to UNESCO accepting and introducing the idea of ‘Ambassadors for Peace’ to all World Heritage Sites.

As noted in the Report, a visitor to a new exhibition on Hadrian’s Wall, prompted by the authors, reflected that *“I have been visiting Hadrian’s Wall for 30 years... I had never thought about it before.”* One person thinking of the value of heritage to contribute to peace is a significant achievement. Just think of the impact we might have if *all* visitors to *all* World Heritage Sites came away thinking the same.

Professor Anne Anderson OBE FRSE – Chair, UK National Commission for UNESCO

Chris Blandford OBE – President, World Heritage UK

Professor Chris Day CBE DL – Vice Chancellor and President Newcastle University, UK

A Summary

1. In 2016, the UNESCO Chair team in Cultural Property Protection and Peace at Newcastle University (UK), set out to explore what scope there might be for World Heritage Sites to do more to support UNESCO's founding *raison d'être*, of contributing to world peace through education, science, and culture, and for World Heritage Sites ultimately to become 'Ambassadors for Peace'.
2. This Report sets out the work subsequently undertaken by the team in relation to this question and presents a series of conclusions and recommendations regarding how this work might now be taken forward.
3. The Report identifies that a number of UK Sites have, as a result of this project, begun to take action to support UNESCO's founding *raison d'être*. The extent to which further World Heritage Sites elsewhere might similarly undertake such actions remains to be explored, but it is anticipated that sharing the findings of this project more widely will encourage them to do so.
4. The project's conclusions can be summarised as answers to three questions:
 - i. *Are World Heritage Sites, currently effectively contributing to UNESCO's raison d'être of establishing peace in the minds of men [and women]?*
Answer: No.
 - ii. *Could World Heritage Sites become 'Ambassadors for Peace'?*
Answer: Yes, absolutely.
 - iii. *Will they?*
Answer: Time will tell, but only if they are encouraged to do so.
5. The UNESCO Chair team would, ideally, now take the World Heritage and Peace Initiative to its next intended stage of testing the potential international applicability and relevance of the findings of, and the resources generated by, the pilot project conducted with UK World Heritage Sites. However, given other commitments and the absence of available funding to support this, the team is currently unable to do so.
6. The Report therefore identifies the need to identify funding to either allow the Newcastle UNESCO Chair team to continue with an international project or for another organisation to take-on an international project. The current authors would be available to support as necessary and possible.
7. While the 2019 research carried out by Newcastle found that only 16 out of c.850 Sites assessed made any direct reference to UNESCO's founding objective (six of which were in the UK), it also identified a further c.140 Sites which specifically referenced 'peace' within their Statements of Significance or their Attributes, albeit without acknowledging UNESCO's founding *raison d'être*. There is therefore at least a latent acknowledgement of the responsibility and opportunity provided by including World Heritage and Peace into the policies and activities of numerous World Heritage Sites. This sits waiting to be built upon.

B Recommendations

1. That funding be sourced for an international project to test and build on the work done with UK World Heritage Sites.
2. Such an international project, which could be linked to UNESCO's 80th anniversary activities, would need to:
 - a) Identify and recruit a balanced selection of 15-20 World Heritage Sites from across the globe as project participants.
 - b) Review and potentially adapt the resources developed by the UK project, and the principal findings of the UK research, so that they may be more universally relevant and relatable.
 - c) Convene a workshop of participating Sites at which:
 - i. The findings of the UK research and the resources developed would be presented.
 - ii. Participating Sites would in turn present their own perspectives on the World Heritage and Peace Initiative.
 - iii. Participating Sites would be invited to then undertake a trial period of adapting the resources provided as appropriate to their own particular contexts and of piloting some specific initiatives with their respective stakeholders, communities, and audiences.
 - d) Convene a second workshop in which participating Sites would report back on:
 - i. Their respective experiences during the trial period.
 - ii. How those activities had been received by their different stakeholders, communities, and audiences. And,
 - iii. Present their thoughts on how they might take this initiative forward in future.
 - e) Produce
 - i. A travelling exhibition for each participating Site to use within their own countries to raise awareness of the concept of World Heritage Sites as 'Ambassadors for Peace'.
 - ii. An academic publication reviewing the international project, and possibly, if funding permits,
 - iii. A well-illustrated book for the public on the concept of World Heritage Sites as 'Ambassadors for Peace'.
 - f) Produce and publish a report on this proposed international project with recommendations to the World Heritage Centre and World Heritage Committee for future actions.

c The Issue

1. The United Nations (UN) was established towards the end of WWII in 1945 in San Francisco. Its overall *raison d'être* was “*to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war*”. It sought to do this by building structures and mechanisms of dialogue and co-operation between nations through which international peace and security could be maintained.
2. One of the first agencies which the UN established was the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Preamble to UNESCO's Constitution declares that “since wars begin in the minds of men [sic], it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed”, and went on to set out how this might be achieved through scientific, educational, and cultural exchanges to promote better understanding of and between different peoples and nations. All Member States to UNESCO specifically sign-up to the Constitution, and this Preamble, when joining.
3. Thus, UNESCO's primary *raison d'être* was, and, in theory, remains, to foster peace through the promotion of greater international and intercultural dialogue through education, science, and culture. Over the decades following its establishment there was, however, little apparent evidence of this fundamental *raison d'être* being either further articulated in UNESCO's priorities and strategies or reflected in its practical activities and programmes.
4. Perhaps UNESCO's most high-profile and most widely supported initiative has been the establishment, through its 1972 World Heritage Convention, of the World Heritage List representing humanity's shared and collective heritage – sites exhibiting “*outstanding universal value*” to all humanity. As such, its constituent World Heritage Sites are arguably ideally placed to illustrate the commonalities and inter-connectedness of all humanity and thereby to support UNESCO's founding *raison d'être* by becoming ‘Ambassadors for Peace’. By 2016, however, over 40 years after the Convention's adoption, little had been done under the banner of World Heritage to seize this opportunity either internationally or nationally and individual World Heritage Sites had rarely acknowledged or sought to directly promote that aspiration.
5. There had however been two notable exceptions to the idea of addressing peace through World Heritage activities. At the international level, in 1995, came the development of the World Heritage Education Project and the publication, in 1998, of *World Heritage in Young Hands*⁴. Taking an interdisciplinary approach, the publication has four central chapters including one on ‘*World Heritage and a Culture of Peace*’. However, while *Young Hands* has been translated into 40 languages it is now out-of-date and rarely used by World Heritage sites – at least in the UK⁵.

⁴ See <https://whc.unesco.org/en/educationkit/>

⁵ A review of UK World Heritage Sites' management plans undertaken in 2021 found no references therein to *Young Hands*.

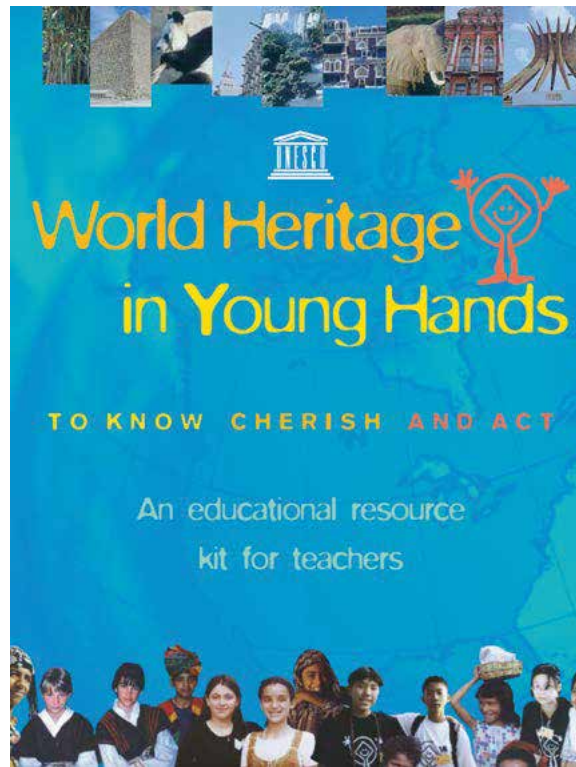


Fig 1. World Heritage in Young Hands
© UNESCO

6. At the Site level, a second exception was ‘the Living Wall’ project undertaken by Hadrian’s Wall (part of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site) at Tullie House Museum, Carlisle in 2014, which sought to broaden on-site interpretation to include wider issues relating to peace, rather than focussing entirely on the direct history or archaeology of the World Heritage Site. Previous interpretation at points along the Wall provided a wealth of information on the Roman Army, Frontier, and Empire but little of the impact of the army of an Empire establishing a hard border across the lands of a subjugated population. Good interpretation is more than providing information and should “provoke” the visitor to think⁶.

The resulting exhibition invites audiences to consider the impact of walls, fences, and other barriers through history and across the world, with documentary and video comments on each by those affected by the barrier. The current authors were involved in these projects. After visiting the new exhibition visitors wrote:

“I have visited Hadrian’s Wall many times... this is the first time I have seriously considered the social and personal consequences of the wall.”

“I have been visiting Hadrian’s Wall for 30 years... I had never thought about it before.”

“The only museum I have been to that really links the past with the present... Thank you for telling the world that it still has too many walls dividing people.”

⁶ Freeman Tilden, 1957, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, University Of North Carolina Press.



Fig 2. The Living Wall at Tullie House Museum, interpreting Hadrian's Wall

© Tullie House Museum

7. A further exception, but not directly linked to World Heritage Sites, was the reiteration of the link between culture and peace at an institutional level made by Irina Bokova, Director General of UNESCO, in an address to the UN Security Council in 2015, when she argued that *“Culture stands on the front-line of conflict, it should be at the front-line of peacebuilding.”* In addition, several UN Security Council Resolutions (e.g., 2199, 2347, and 2368) have identified damage and destruction of cultural property as a serious security issue making the link between conflict, attacks on cultural property, the associated trade in illicit cultural property, the funding of various armed non-State actors, and the destabilising impact all have on global peace.
8. Furthermore in 2015, the UN adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which identified 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 16 that promotes: *“peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels”*. By implication responsibility for promoting this, and other, SDGs lies with all UN members and institutions including UNESCO and its World Heritage programme⁷.
9. We are aware that there have been other initiatives such as the Arab World Heritage Young Professionals Forum established in 2019 within the World Heritage Education Programme, which has sought to mobilise World Heritage as a tool to combat violent extremism. Moreover, several World Heritage Sites, including the ruins of Taxila in Pakistan and the Genbaku Dome in Hiroshima have been the focus of peacebuilding initiatives through the interventions of heritage organisations such as the Heritage Foundation of Pakistan and Hiroshima for Global Peace respectively.
10. As identified in the ICOMOS Second Report (2020) on ‘Sites Associated with Memories of Recent Conflicts and the World Heritage Convention’, numerous World Heritage Sites are identified with, and having meaning to, communities that have experienced conflict. However, this does not entail that such sites actively promote peacebuilding, nor is it the case that capacities for building peace only lie, or should lie, in these sites.

⁷ The review undertaken in 2021 (see Footnote 2 above) identified that the most recently updated Management Plans for UK World Heritage Sites had included assessments of their contributions to supporting the SDGs.

D Newcastle University's World Heritage and Peace Initiative

Initial Activities

11. Against this background, following its establishment in 2016, the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace at Newcastle University (UK), set out to explore what scope there might be for World Heritage Sites to do more to support UNESCO's founding *raison d'être* and ultimately to become 'Ambassadors for Peace'.
12. Plans were drawn up to run an international pilot project, involving a range of World Heritage Sites from across the globe, to explore these ideas. The plan envisaged that 15 Sites drawn equally from across Africa, Asia, and Europe would be brought together to investigate, over an 18-month period, how they could develop their interpretation to support UNESCO's *raison d'être*. It was intended that the project would be supported by a small team comprising a project coordinator and three part-time regional support staff who would visit the sites in their regions during the project to cross-fertilise ideas.
13. As a preliminary to this, desktop research was undertaken in 2019 to review the official documentation of all cultural and mixed World Heritage Sites⁸, to identify how many directly acknowledged or referenced UNESCO's *raison d'être* of the promotion of peace. The research found that only 16 out of c.850 Sites assessed made any direct reference to UNESCO's founding objective, six of which were in the UK, although it also identified a further c.140 Sites which specifically referenced 'peace' within their Statements of Significance or their Attributes, albeit without acknowledging UNESCO's founding *raison d'être*.
14. In addition, further research was undertaken to review official policy documentation relating to both World Heritage in particular and to UNESCO initiatives more broadly. The former found that there were no references to UNESCO's *raison d'être* in the Convention itself, its periodically updated Operational Guidelines, the 'Five C's' of its Strategic Objectives, nor in its Resource Manuals, while UNESCO's World Heritage mission was focused solely on the nomination, conservation, and management of Sites⁹. Furthermore, of UNESCO's six Cultural Conventions only that of 'Concerning the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions' makes any reference to the promotion of peace¹⁰.
15. This intended international project was then de-railed by the Covid-19 pandemic. While continuing to be committed to an international project, The UNESCO Chair team therefore decided, given the impossibility of running an international project at the time, to instead run a similar albeit smaller pilot project, funded by Newcastle University, focussed only on UK World Heritage Sites. We hope this Report will re-energise the plans for an international project.

⁸ Restricted to these sites because of financial constraints. This research was undertaken by Newcastle Chair team member Valentina Sabucco.

⁹ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>

¹⁰ Article 1 of the Convention sets out its nine objectives, objective c) being 'to encourage dialogue among cultures with a view to ensuring wider and balanced cultural exchanges in the world in favour of intercultural respect and a culture of peace'. It should however be acknowledged that the Conference held to mark the 70th anniversary of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict was entitled 'Cultural Heritage and Peace: Building on 70 Years of the Hague Convention'. Also, the 1954 Hague Convention Secretariat has recently developed a 'World Heritage and Peace' – Thematic Programme with three 'Strategic axes: **Strategic Axis 1.** Cultural heritage as a tool of mediation for peacekeeping and conflict prevention; **Strategic Axis 2.** Cultural heritage as a mediation tool for the resolution of armed conflict; **Strategic Axis 3.** Heritage as a mediation tool for post-conflict recovery.

E The UK Pilot Project

Intended Project Aims, Objectives, and Outcomes

16. The Project's overall **aims** were to:
 - promote greater awareness and understanding of UNESCO's founding objective amongst UK World Heritage Sites, and
 - assist them to undertake actions to promote that objective.
17. The Project's specific **objectives** were to:
 - establish a clearer understanding of to what extent the UK's cultural¹¹ World Heritage Sites were aware of UNESCO's founding *raison d'être*, and what if anything they were doing to support it.
 - better understand individual Sites' perceptions of what factors might be inhibiting them from doing more to support it.
 - identify what might be done to assist individual Sites to address those factors.
 - identify specific examples of good practice in support of UNESCO's founding objective of the promotion of peace.
18. The Project's intended **outcomes** were to:
 - illustrate to other individual World Heritage Sites what they might in turn do to support UNESCO's *raison d'être*.
 - provide an approach and a framework for assisting World Heritage Sites to support that *raison d'être*, the applicability of such a framework to other Sites in different parts of the world might then be tested.
 - ultimately influence international and national policy to better reflect and support UNESCO's founding aspiration.
19. The resultant project, run in two phases between 2021/23, contained two strands of research activities: an updated review of official documentation and policy; and interviews and workshops with senior staff at UK World Heritage Sites.

¹¹ This review was limited to cultural sites by financial constraints on time.

Review of Documentation and Policy

20. First, official documentation for all UK World Heritage Sites, including their most recent Management Plans, was reviewed. This found that there had been little substantive change in the incidence of those referencing or acknowledging UNESCO's founding objective since the review in 2019. Second, the 2019 review of official documentation was extended to include all World Heritage Sites inscribed since 2019, plus all natural World Heritage Sites¹². This identified that no further World Heritage Sites had referenced, or acknowledged, UNESCO's *raison d'être*.
21. More positively, this review of policy identified something of a re-awakening within UNESCO of the significance of its founding *raison d'être*. The UNESCO website had recently introduced the strapline of: *'building peace in the minds of men and women'*. However, how this reawakening might be translated into related, tangible, action requires further consideration.
22. A further positive development has been UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029 (MTS) which mentions the word 'peace' 19 times. Its Mission Statement reads:
- "As a specialised agency of the United Nations, UNESCO – pursuant to its constitution – contributes to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, and sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information."*¹³

Later in the Medium-Term Strategy it states UNESCO will:

"... apply a human rights-, peace- and sustainable development-based approach to all its programmes..." (Paragraph 19, P.14) and *"build inclusive, just, and peaceful societies by promoting freedom of expression, cultural diversity, education for global citizenship, and protecting the heritage."* (Strategic Objective 3, P.19 – Our Emphasis).

The Medium-Term Strategy is obviously a strategic document and should not be expected to provide delivery detail. Nevertheless, **how** peaceful societies can be built through the promotion of freedom of expression, cultural diversity, education for global citizenship, and protecting the heritage requires further articulation.

¹² Undertaken by Esther Davidson, research student at Newcastle University.

¹³ Medium Term Strategy 2022-2029
<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000378083?posInSet=4&queryId=f4082765-2f1f-4710-a706-047db14472d1-draft-data-297>

Interviews with Individual UK World Heritage Sites

23. The project then embarked on a series of interviews (by phone or Zoom due to Covid constraints) over the summer of 2021 with 16 UK World Heritage Sites, representing roughly half of its inscribed Sites. The interviews explored three principal questions:

- What were Sites currently doing to support UNESCO's objective?
- What was inhibiting or impeding Sites from doing more?
- What might assist Sites to address those barriers?

24. In terms of current activities, the interviews confirmed that, although most Sites had an awareness of UNESCO's founding *raison d'être* of the promotion of peace, few were making any public reference to it (or indeed to UNESCO) and fewer still were directly undertaking activities to support the aspiration.

The interviews did however reveal that several Sites were already engaging in a range of activities which promote, often through international exchanges, understanding of and between different cultures, without overtly linking those activities to the promotion of peace. Those Sites did express a general interest in exploring how those activities, or indeed others they might undertake, could be re-presented as contributing to UNESCO's founding *raison d'être*.

25. Four principal issues were identified which were inhibiting Sites doing more to promote UNESCO's peace agenda:

- i. It was felt that the promotion of peace is a somewhat abstract concept which might be difficult to make relevant to individual Sites, their stakeholders, communities, and visitors.
- ii. Similarly, those audiences generally had low levels of understanding of World Heritage, UNESCO, and the UN and of their *raison d'être*, aims, objectives, and purposes.
- iii. Nearly all respondents also stated that they did not have any examples of good practice of how Sites might contribute to the promotion of peace or guidance about how this could be done.
- iv. In addition, some interviewees pointed out that there is currently no obligation or requirement upon them to support UNESCO's founding *raison d'être*, while their finite management resources were already consumed with a range of other obligations to various parties, including reporting to the World Heritage Centre, and their day-to-day operational priorities.

26. Consequentially, the interviews identified three things that would most assist them to do more to promote UNESCO's founding *raison d'être*.

- i. The reframing or re-articulation of that *raison d'être* in more accessible language, based in the first instance around '*the promotion of greater understanding of and between different peoples and cultures*', which then might be linked into the idea of the promotion of peace, rather than the other way round.
- ii. The provision of some background texts and other resources which explained, in more accessible language for their largely lay audiences, not only UNESCO and its *raison d'être*, but also World Heritage itself.

iii. It was widely felt that the provision of some examples or ideas from other sites of how greater understanding of and between different peoples and cultures might be promoted, and hence in turn the promotion of peace might be undertaken, would be of most practical assistance to them in this endeavour.

27. A further set of three comments emerged from the interviews concerning measures which they felt might be counter-productive and should therefore be avoided in seeking to help individual World Heritage Sites in doing more to support UNESCO's founding *raison d'être*.
- i. Acknowledging that each Site is different in its nature and the environment in which it operates, it was strongly felt that there should be no attempt to impose any 'one-size-fits-all' blueprint or model on Sites.
 - ii. Similarly, respondents felt that any further specific obligations which might be imposed on them should either be very loosely framed or avoided altogether.
 - iii. In a similar vein many interviewees stated that whatever they might undertake in support of UNESCO's *raison d'être* must not compromise their respective current core activities and responsibilities.

Project Workshops 2022/2023

28. These research findings were then presented to UK World Heritage Sites at an on-line workshop in February 2022, with the participation of 16 (around 50%) of UK Sites. The workshop concluded with the agreement that the resources identified as being potentially beneficial in helping individual Sites to do more to promote UNESCO's peace *raison d'être* would then be developed by the UNESCO Chair team in conjunction with World Heritage UK¹⁴ (WHUK) and the UK National Commission for UNESCO¹⁵ (UKNC).

This was completed later in 2022, and the resources developed were then circulated to all UK World Heritage Sites, for them to utilise as appropriate to their individual Sites and their capacities to do so. The four resources provided consisted of:

- i. A series of background texts suitable for adaptation for incorporation into Sites' websites, on-site interpretation, and management plans, explaining in non-technical language:
 - What is the United Nations?
 - What is UNESCO?
 - What is World Heritage?
 - What are the implications of World Heritage status?
 - How World Heritage relates to UNESCO's founding objective of promoting peace.
 - World Heritage in the UK.
 - How World Heritage Sites are run.
- ii. A set of PowerPoint slides which individual Sites might draw upon and adapt for use in presentations and briefings to staff and stakeholders, schools, and communities to raise wider awareness and understanding of UNESCO's peace *raison d'être*.

¹⁴ <https://worldheritageuk.org/>

¹⁵ <https://unesco.org.uk/>

- iii. A draft script and explanatory notes to accompany the PowerPoint slides which may be adapted and used to develop presentations on UNESCO's founding *raison d'être* or incorporated within other presentations to different audiences.
- iv. An example of materials developed by the English Lake District World Heritage Site illustrating how UNESCO's *raison d'être* can be related to a Site's attributes and significance in its on-site interpretation and public messaging.



Fig 4A and 4B. Images of Lake district exhibition
© English Lake District World Heritage Site



- 29. A further on-line workshop, again with the attendance of the same UK Sites, was held early in 2023 at which individual Sites reported back on their experiences of using these resources and the initial responses of different audiences. Several Sites reported that they had not yet had time to fully utilise the resources provided but remained interested in hearing of the experiences of others, of which five Sites then reported as follows:
- 30. Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site described how the theme of World Heritage and peace had featured prominently in its Youth Ambassadors programme (YAMs) and how participants had responded positively to this and incorporated this theme throughout their subsequent projects and activities. The theme had also been interwoven into Durham's work in considering its response to the SDG 16 of developing peaceful and inclusive societies, as a means of transforming this broad-based aspiration to on the ground activities.

A number of public events linked to World Heritage and Peace were developed including a performance of Verdi's 'Defiant Requiem' in the Cathedral attended by over 700 people who saw massed choirs and musicians from across the region perform this magnificent work. The event highlighted the story of the Jewish concentration camp victims of Teresin¹⁶ and their resistance to oppression through their performance of this Requiem. As well as images and recorded testimony accompanying the performance, holocaust survivors and their children attended the performance and spoke to the audience.

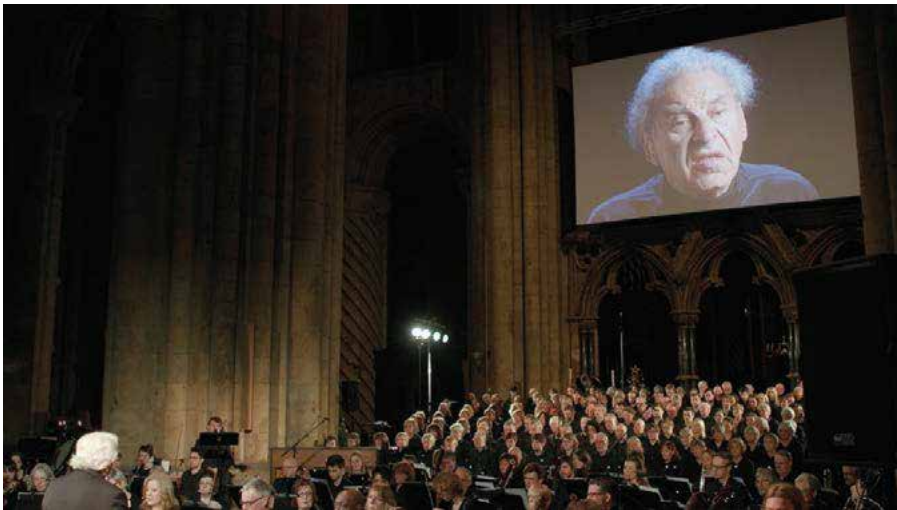


Fig 5. A performance of Verdi's 'Defiant Requiem' in the Cathedral, the audience being addressed by a Holocaust survivor
© Durham Cathedral

31. The City of Bath World Heritage Site stated that this project had resulted in a fundamental shift in thinking both within its management but also amongst its stakeholders, who now appreciated for the first time that the Site had a part to play in supporting UNESCO's peace *raison d'être*. The 'personification' of this new awareness had included incorporating the resources provided by the Newcastle Chair team and others, into presentations to stakeholders and into the Site's public messaging, all of which had been positively received. The above resources were also now being widely drawn upon in the updating of the Site's management plan.

"This project has been a timely and powerful reminder of the founding principle of peace in the UNESCO mission. It's all too easy to become embroiled in daily management tasks and overlook a remit that extends far beyond conservation. Inspired by this influential work, we have re-evaluated the peace message in both our management planning and interpretation, and both exercises have been significantly strengthened and improved as a result."

Tony Crouch

Great Spa Towns of Europe Site Manager (City of Bath) and
former City of Bath World Heritage Site Manager

¹⁶ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/1561/#:~:text=Terezin%20Fortress%20is%2C%20beyond%20its,their%20deportation%20to%20the%20Third>

32. Studley Royal Park including the Ruins of Fountains Abbey World Heritage Site reported that while they had previously referenced UNESCO's founding *raison d'être* in their management plan, 'World Heritage and Peace' had now become a core element of their updated plan particularly linked to their interpretive theme of 'Sanctuary and Refuge'. The resources had been used in major stakeholder events and had generated some quite profound responses.

The long-term impact of the UK Project

"In 2019 we began to work with World Heritage UK and Newcastle University to look at how we can play our part in the UNESCO objective to promote peace... This pilot project found that as a network of World Heritage Sites many of us were already promoting understanding of and between different peoples and cultures through exhibitions and activities with our local communities and international audiences. However, little was being done to explicitly promote peace.

Working with our partners and the community we wanted to develop a project that reflected the long and rich history of Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal and the landscape within which it sits. The abbey and gardens lie only two miles west of Ripon, a city with a long history as a place of sanctuary. In 939AD King Athelstan created a ring of sanctuary around Ripon by placing crosses on the roads approaching the city with Ripon Cathedral at its centre.

In 2016, Ripon City of Sanctuary was established as part of a network of City of Sanctuary Groups that promote a culture of welcome for asylum seekers and refugees. Working with a range of community partners and groups we will explore themes around:

- *the history of sanctuary in Ripon and Fountains Abbey and more contemporary sanctuary issues such as refugees and asylum seekers looking for sanctuary, often from war and conflict*
- *sanctuary for mental health and wellbeing*
- *places of sanctuary for nature As part of the consultation on the plan people suggested lots of themes for exploring ideas around peace and what we can learn from the long history of the abbey and gardens.*

Working with partners we will develop these themes further. We will also strengthen our links to peace initiatives in Ripon and the surrounding area."

**Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal,
Management Plan 2023-2029**

33. Saltaire World Heritage Site stated that they are now using the resources in relation to work with student groups, in ongoing European cultural exchanges and with groups working to break down barriers between different sections within their local communities. In addition, they have now expanded references to UNESCO and its peace *raison d'être* within their management plan and have included them for the first time on their website. Responses have been varied, but these materials have been very positively received by some stakeholders.

34. Hadrian's Wall (part of the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site) reported that these themes are now hard-wired into their whole thinking when presenting to different audiences, which they now do based on the theme of 'What is World Heritage?'. The resources are now being almost entirely incorporated across the Site's website as it is in the process of being revamped.

A number of sites have a version of 'Youth Ambassadors'; known as YAMS. YAMS at Hadrian's Wall underwent an initial training programme, delivered in collaboration by partners. One session explicitly talked about UNESCO, peace, and linking it to the Wall.

Fig 6 shows the YAMS learning for themselves on site about what World Heritage means and the association between peace, international cooperation, UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and Hadrian's Wall. They then later presented these concepts and ideals back to the public at the 'Festival of Archaeology-2022' running a YAMS stall at Segedunum Roman Fort.

The training also provided the YAMS with very useful knowledge to underpin their volunteering roles with Hadrian's Wall partners. A number of YAMS were studying heritage topics at university and were able to apply their learning in higher education settings. YAMS are all about empowerment and giving a voice to young people in the management of World Heritage Sites.



Fig 6a. Hadrian's Wall
© World Heritage
Youth Ambassadors

“This project has served to crystalise and articulate our ongoing thinking about the need to better explain the fundamental objectives and purposes of both UNESCO and of World Heritage to our stakeholders, communities and visitors alike.”

John Scott, Management Plan Coordinator,
Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site (Hadrian’s Wall)

As with Hadrian’s Wall, the Antonine Wall was garrisoned and served by troops and civilians from across the Roman Empire. As part of the ‘Rediscovering the Antonine Wall’ project, work took place with asylum seekers and refugees on a piece of work called ‘*Tilal: Rediscovering the Antonine Wall with New Scots*’.

From November 2021 to October 2022, this project strand encouraged people to come together to transform the Antonine Wall, the former frontier of an Empire, into a community resource, and place of shared belonging.



Fig 7. © Rediscovering the Antonine Wall project

35. A broad consensus was also expressed by all those providing feedback that they felt it most constructive to adopt an incremental approach which incorporated an acknowledgement of Sites’ responsibility to support UNESCO’s *raison d’être* of the promotion of peace into their thinking about all their activities, interpretation, and public messaging, rather than approaching it as a discrete project.

36. The workshops also received feedback from the UKNC and from the umbrella organisation for UK World Heritage Sites, WHUK both of which had supported the project throughout. The UKNC advised that they were now utilising the resources provided on their website and in all their public presentations including to policymakers. They felt that the theme provided opportunities for World Heritage Sites to enhance engagement with younger people as well as to further develop linkages with other countries.

WHUK stated that the resources provided by the project had now been included in the resource pages for World Heritage Sites on their website and were keen to promote UNESCO’s peace *raison d’être* as a potential theme for future World Heritage Days.

F Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

37. Despite having been largely overlooked until quite recently, UNESCO's founding *raison d'être* of the promotion of peace has begun to be more widely acknowledged, although how it is to be instigated in terms of either official policy or specific actions remains to be articulated.
38. The Pilot Project undertaken with UK World Heritage Sites has identified that individual Sites are beginning to acknowledge that World Heritage status brings with it a responsibility to support UNESCO's *raison d'être*, and that doing so is in keeping with the whole ethos and purpose of World Heritage.
39. The degree to which that responsibility may be similarly acknowledged by other World Heritage Sites elsewhere, and how far the approaches now being adopted by a number of UK Sites to fulfilling that responsibility may be applied to and adapted by other World Heritage Sites, should therefore now be explored in more detail.
40. The overall conclusion from work carried out so far can be summarised as three questions:
- i. *Are World Heritage Sites, currently effectively contributing to UNESCO's *raison d'être* of establishing peace in the minds of men [and women]?*
Answer: No.
 - ii. *Could World Heritage Sites become 'Ambassadors for Peace'?*
Answer: Yes, absolutely.
 - iii. *Will they?*
Answer: Time will tell, but only if they are encouraged to do so.

Recommendations

1. That funding be sourced for an international project to test and build on the work done with UK World Heritage Sites.
2. Such an international project, which could be linked to UNESCO's 80th anniversary activities, would need to:
 - a) Identify and recruit a balanced selection of 15-20 WH Sites from across the globe as project participants.
 - b) Review and potentially adapt the resources developed by the UK project, and the principal findings of the UK research so that they may be more universally relevant and relatable.
 - c) Convene a Workshop of participating Sites at which:
 - i. The findings of the UK research and the resources developed would be presented.
 - ii. Participating Sites would in turn present their own perspectives on the World Heritage and Peace Initiative.
 - iii. Participating Sites would be invited to then undertake a trial period of adapting the resources provided as appropriate to their own particular contexts and of piloting some specific initiatives with their respective stakeholders, communities, and audiences.
 - d) Convene a second workshop in which participating Sites would report back on:
 - i. Their respective experiences during the trial period.
 - ii. How those activities had been received by their different stakeholders, communities, and audiences. And
 - iii. Present their thoughts on how they might take this initiative forward in future.
 - e) Produce
 - i. A travelling exhibition for each participating Site to use within their own countries to raise awareness of the concept of World Heritage Sites as 'Ambassadors for peace'.
 - ii. An academic publication reviewing the international project, and possibly, if funding permits,
 - iii. A well-illustrated book for the public on the concept of World Heritage Sites as 'Ambassadors for Peace'.
 - f) Produce and publish a report on this proposed international project with recommendations to the World Heritage Centre and World Heritage Committee for future actions.

