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Collective Expressions Of Memory In The Isle Of Man

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Much has been written about how Great Britain remembers the events of World War Two. The prevailing tendency within British society is to focus on the positive aspects of the War to see the entire war as ‘Britain’s finest hour’. This often minimizes controversial aspects of the conflict, and the diversity of experience across the rest of the British Isles, in order to reinforce notions of British unity. This has been described by historians as the ‘Churchill paradigm’, which manifests itself not only in mental memory, but in collective expressions of a society’s identity.

The Manx and the War

The Manx experience of the war is primarily involved with a negative aspect of the war - internment. Do they remember the war in a typically ‘British’ way? Or, due to their unique identity and history, have they charted their own mnemonic course? By examining ‘sites of memory’, tangible forms of the commemoration of the war, it is possible to gauge how the Manx as a society, collectively remember the War.

Conclusions

Manx remembrance of the war is still connected to, yet distinct from typically ‘British’ celebrations. Through the use of National Heritage sites and commemorations, the Manx have sought to appropriate British commemorative tropes, while adding their own twist. This highlights their own distinctive contributions within the British National experience, while at the same time delimits their own unique culture and identity.

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