The *Mayflower* and ‘Mother Plymouth’: Anglo-America, Civic Culture and the Urban Past

Tom Hulme
Queen’s University Belfast

**ABSTRACT**

Historians are now well-attuned to the development of modern urban rituals and civic identities, and how both can depend on expressions of local and national historical character. In this article I take a different approach, by demonstrating how the idea of an Anglo-American shared past could also inflect urban culture. I use a case study of the *Mayflower* in Plymouth, tracing this seventeenth-century voyage’s afterlife, from its romantic and nonconformist Victorian origins to its emergence as a symbol of transatlantic ‘Anglo-Saxon’ bonds in the opening decades of the twentieth century, and all the way to its use as ‘heritage’ in the city today.

In the summer of 1920, the Anglo-American world celebrated the 300th anniversary of the voyage of the *Mayflower* that carried the ‘Pilgrim Fathers’ to the so-called ‘New World’. Plymouth, one of several ports in Britain that claimed precedence as a departure point for these Separatist colonial settlers, took a central role in the proceedings. The whole town was decked in the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes, with schools and businesses closing on certain days to give local people the opportunity to enjoy the festivities. Around 30,000 spectators gathered on the Plymouth Hoe on the main day of the commemoration to see the civic procession that wound its way from the town’s Guildhall, with tens of thousands more lining the route. Musical concerts and choirs accompanied the speeches by civic figures, and a huge historical pageant served as the headline attraction. During one public ceremony, the wife of W.H. Page, the late American Ambassador, was presented with a silver *Mayflower* model (received on her behalf by J. Butler Wright, the American Charge d’Affaires); in return, she gifted the town a specially bound copy of a speech her husband had made in Plymouth in 1917 (presented to the mayor by Nancy Astor, the Anglo-American Plymouth Sutton MP).¹

In ‘The Union of Two Great Peoples’, delivered shortly before the American entry to the First World War, Page had used the *Mayflower* and the Pilgrims as an allegory for the return of ‘American warships, no doubt with the descendants of those same men’.² Now that the War had been won, the genealogical link between Britain and the burgeoning power of the US, which the Pilgrims supposedly represented, was a cause for public celebration – an opportunity that Plymouth was not going to miss.

**CONTACT** Tom Hulme t.hulme@qub.ac.uk; @tomhulme87 17 University Square, Queen’s University Belfast, Belfast, BT7 1PA

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article. © 2021 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.
Historians are now well-attuned to the development of commemorations like these, and how the performance of ‘civic ritual’ worked towards the achievement of several goals, from the cementing of middle-class urban control to economic 'place promotion'. For the most part, it is the mercantile cities of the north and midlands, like Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham, that have provided scholars of Britain with their material. In such cities, the threads of civic pride were woven into a tapestry that depicted a relatively introspective story: the contribution of locality to the Whiggish development of the nation through social and economic advance and the supposed virtues of the industrial bourgeoisie. Ports like Plymouth, however, as my opening vignette begins to suggest, could utilise a subtly different narrative in the creation of civic identity – one that looked beyond the borders of both the locality and the nation. As Brad Beaven, Karl Bell and Robert James have recently argued, ports are particular ‘cultural entities in their own right’ and as such are ‘open to a rich array of cultural exchanges derived from both domestic terrestrial and transnational maritime influences’. Much of this outlook has related to how imperial connections, both in reality and representation, had shaped their past and present – a facet of urban culture recently explored by historians of Plymouth and other places. The potential use of the US in these civic identities, however, has received far less attention; scholars of cultural diplomacy have shown how shared histories inflected the Anglo-American discourse, but the city as an active site of this relationship has remained firmly in the background.

In this article, I use the commemoration of the Mayflower in Plymouth to demonstrate one example of the rise and fall of the use of a transnational shared past in modern urban identities and rituals. I argue that through the operation of civic culture – the productive interaction of elites (municipal, ecclesiastical, mercantile), the local press, voluntary associations, and the broader population – the popular historical tale of the Mayflower was repurposed to suit different agendas at certain moments. I begin by tracing the emergence of Pilgrim memory in Plymouth in the mid-Victorian era, especially in nonconformist circles, and the concurrent development of a civic culture that depended on an outward-looking understanding of the urban past. I then turn to the diplomatic rapprochement between Britain and the US at the end of the nineteenth century, and how it was fed with cultural (re)connection and shared stories of a popular ‘Anglo-Saxon’ history. Plymouth could now position itself as a node in the Anglo-American relationship – a role the town’s boosters insisted had its genesis in blood. I then focus on the Mayflower Tercentenary, arguably the apotheosis of this form of internationalised urban identity in Plymouth. As knowledge of the Pilgrims grew during this Anglo-American cultural exchange, a variety of civic institutions – most prominently the town council and the local press – used the symbolism of the voyage to demonstrate the legitimacy of a historically informed civic pride. Finally, I show how, as the century wore on, the Pilgrims became a less evocative symbol of both civic pride and Anglo-American diplomacy, and more a basic facet of local heritage consumption in Plymouth.

**Mayflower memories emerge**

In the early part of the nineteenth century, the Pilgrims were mostly known to British audiences through home-grown patriotic portrayals in literature and art. Felicia Hemans’ poem 'The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England' (1825), for example, evoked
the stoicism, bravery and endurance in the American ‘wilderness’ of these early colonists, and was republished countless times, often in lavish decorative souvenir volumes; its success on both sides of the Atlantic cemented a romantic image of the Pilgrims in the public consciousness. Charles Lucy’s painting ‘The Departure of the Pilgrim Fathers’ (1847) focused more on devotion and piety mixed with emotional desperation as the settlers bid farewell to their Old World pastor; though entered unsuccessfully in the competition to decorate the new Houses of Parliament, over the next twenty years it went on a voyage of its own around the art galleries and church halls of Britain, where local preachers gave lectures that extolled the virtues of the Pilgrims and their suitability for emulation. Imaginings of the Mayflower such as these endured for generations, embedding a narrative of an ‘English spirit’ that was attractive to a variety of Victorian and Edwardian audiences, from patriotic Empire builders to Christian civic uplifters.

It took slightly longer, however, for the Pilgrim mythology to become linked to particular urban places. But, in the late 1840s and 1850s, a confluence of both growing interest and surprise archival discoveries set the stage for a growth in localised rather than simply artistic Mayflower memorialisation. Remarkably, when one considers the power the Pilgrims already had as a national origin myth by the time of the American Revolution and the popularity of the 200th anniversary of the voyage in 1820, some of the specifics of those origins were still murky. In New England, however, a growing interest in genealogy gradually fused with both civil and ecclesiastical enthusiasm for tracing a lineage from the English past to the American present. When Joseph Hunter, an English antiquarian and archivist in regular communication with Massachusetts researchers, proved beyond doubt in 1849 that the small village of Scrooby in Nottinghamshire had been the early home of the Separatist congregation, it ‘revive[d] and deepen[ed] the interest … more than’ he ‘could possibly have anticipated, both at home and in New England’. Even more important was the discovery in the 1850s of the original manuscript of Governor William Bradford’s seventeenth-century memoir ‘Of Plimoth Plantation’; long-considered lost (likely stolen by British troops sacking Boston during the Revolutionary Wars), its republication brought a renewed fervour to the intellectual desire to better understand the English origins of the New Plymouth settlement.

Local historians, politicians and preachers now had the material they needed to begin connecting themselves – and their towns – to what was becoming a powerful transatlantic tale. Yet it was not until the final part of the century that serious notice was taken of Plymouth’s role in the Pilgrims’ story. Ironically, given the town’s long history of national importance having been the launch place for many colonial expeditions, it was slower in developing a vibrant civic culture than the industrial boomtowns. Just as important as Mayflower archival material, then, was the motive: it was only with a renewed growth in the later-nineteenth century of chronological narrative histories – a common style of writing for municipal enthusiasts that outlined the development of their town from earliest origins to contemporary greatness – that the Pilgrims came into play. Plymouth was now more keen to recognise the cultural purchase of these pious settlers; the serendipitous name of the original colony of course meant the connection was easy to evoke in the popular imagination, and the Devon port had a well-recognised role in Britain’s past and present naval power. Encouraged by the boom in domestic tourist rail travel, travel guides in the 1860s began giving at least a brief mention to the Mayflower as
one example of the historic attractions of the town. 18 In 1871, Richard Nicholls Worth’s ‘first published history of the good old town of Plymouth’ gave the topic a fuller treatment, locating it as one example of the port’s contribution to a long roll-call of ‘discovery and adventure’. 19 As Worth concluded, ‘the first attempts to settle what is now the great Republic of the West were made by Devonshire men, sailing out of Plymouth Sound’; thus, ‘the first germs of that great nation are traceable to Western adventurers, or Western ports’ – a fact that elicited some pride, especially as it became clear the US was becoming the pre-eminent global power. 20

Entwining the local with the international was not just happening in the works of antiquarians but the very urban landscape, as elites expressed their hopes for the future by cementing in stone and glass the great achievements of the past. 21 In 1874, following a fresh burst of municipal energy, the Plymouth Guildhall was erected in the Gothic revival style, complete with 14 stained-glass windows. Scenes like the assembly of the fleet under Edward the Black Prince in 1315, or the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, told the story of Plymouth’s contribution to Britain; over the main entrance to the building was a depiction of the embarkation of the Pilgrims in 1620 from the Plymouth Barbican. Gifted by the present mayor, Alfred Rooker, this most prominent window was testament to how much the Mayflower had become a recognisable symbol in British culture. 22 The various ceremonies associated with the building’s opening were then an opportunity for lavish displays of civic authority; ‘many thousands congregated to witness the interesting spectacle’ of the laying of the foundation stone, for example, with ‘all the pomp and circumstance that local arrangements could give’. That the Western Morning News noted the ceremony was followed by ‘the inevitable dinner’ at a local hotel shows just how common – and even tedious to some – such rituals were. 23

It is worth noting here how strong nonconformity was in Plymouth’s emerging civic culture, because it provides us with one reason why the Mayflower became an attractive emblem of identity for the town. Like other Congregationalists on both sides of the Atlantic, Rooker traced the roots of his denomination back to the Separatists of the seventeenth century. 24 For nonconformists in Britain 250 years later, still facing a degree of legal discrimination, the popular (if rose-tinted) narrative of the Pilgrims had a powerful resonance: the search for religious and political freedom beyond the clutches of the established church. Thus, when Rooker - a deacon of the Sherwell Congregational Church (which later installed its own ‘Mayflower window’) - was sworn in as mayor in 1851 and described how ‘the history’ of Plymouth ‘was connected with that which was strikingly interesting to the nation at large’, the Pilgrims were one example to which he drew prolonged attention. 25 As several scholars have shown, denominations outside the Anglican establishment were a key part of the public culture that grew in tandem with a new Victorian middle-class industrial (and prominently Liberal) elite. 26 Plymouth was an exemplar: in 1871, in the three towns that made up the Plymouth area, the Church of England had 14 places of worship with roughly 12,400 sittings (39% of the total), whereas the nonconformist denominations were spread across 26 places of worship and 16,700 sittings (53% of the total). The various Methodist congregations when combined made up the largest grouping of nonconformists, but the Congregationalists were second. Twenty years later the Church of England provision was almost exactly the same, but its share of the total sittings had dropped to 35%, largely due to the continuing local growth of nonconformity. 27 In spite of the old strength of the Anglican establishment, in
the 1870s three of eight of Plymouth’s mayors were well-known for their Liberal and nonconformist affiliations. Two years after the erection of the Guildhall, the Congregationalist Rev W. Whitley (of Batter Street Chapel) could thus give a series of Sermons on the Panels of the New Guildhall that brought all the stained-glass scenes ‘back to religion’; ‘who’, he asked, could not ‘see perfect harmony between Religion, Art, Science, and Industry’?

When a small Mayflower memorial was unveiled in the town in 1891, then, it was just the latest opportunity to link nonconformity and Plymouth together through a story of religious freedom that was increasingly well-known on both sides of the Atlantic. The memorial took the form of a simple stone – engraved ‘Mayflower 1620’, and thus reminiscent of the similarly inscribed Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts – placed in the harbour. A nearby plaque explained how:

On the 16th of September, 1620, in the Mayoralty of Thomas Fownes, after being kindly entertained and courteously used by divers[sic] friends there dwelling, the Pilgrim Fathers sailed from Plymouth in the Mayflower in the providence of God to settle New Plymouth and to lay the foundation of the New England States.

This memorial was unveiled while the International Congregational Council was taking place in London, which meant present-day English Congregationalists were now joined by their brethren from both mainland Europe and North America. Such an event was a recognition that they had much in common despite their geographical disparateness, bound together by the ship that had carried their ancestors from the Old World to the New. For Plymouth’s nonconformists, this small stone was also an example of something simpler: the growing confidence they had in their contribution to the town’s civic culture.

Anglo-Saxonism and transatlantic rapprochement

The rituals surrounding the new memorial also demonstrated an emerging shift in the tenor of the Mayflower’s afterlife in Plymouth. As the local Western Morning News evocatively described, the ‘new pilgrimage’ of the ‘American descendants’ over ‘the ground which the men of the Mayflower have walked ... brought the Present and the Past strangely together’. When the group of descendants were then received at the Guildhall by the mayor (J.T. Bond, a Baptist), the platform underneath the ‘Pilgrim Fathers Window’ was decorated with ‘the Union Jack and the Stars and Stripes of the United States ... suggestively entwined’. Relations between Britain and the US, after a fraught period during the American Civil War, were recovering markedly by the 1890s. Amicable cooperation during the Venezuela Crisis (1895) and the American war with Spain (1898) was positively effecting high-level diplomacy, but the return from London to Massachusetts of Bradford’s manuscript history of the Plymouth Plantation that same decade symbolised the shift in the popular imagination. Recognising its world supremacy was under threat, Britain preferred to face the more immediate danger of a militaristic Germany in relative harmony with her former colony. Britain moved away from ‘isolation’, and the US became less critical of the British Empire, as it acquired its own territories and protectorates in Latin America, the Caribbean and the Far East. The two nations moved closer together, with transatlantic elite connections through an
Anglo-American ‘marriage market’, faster travel, growth of mass media, and an acknowledgment that common values and language united them.\textsuperscript{33}

Promoters of the Pilgrims in Britain now reached for the language of ancestry and imperial destiny; Americans were no longer just imbued with the thirst for freedom that originated with religious nonconformity, but also carried the blood of colonial adventurers that had founded a great new nation – a dubious claim, but a powerful one nonetheless. Such ancestral sentiments were strongly expressed in a wave of celebratory civic histories in Plymouth. In Henry Francis Whitfield’s \textit{Plymouth and Devonport: in Times of War and Peace} (1900), he described how ‘Mother Plymouth sitting by the Sea’ had enabled the exploring of ‘strange lands’ with ‘a courage not unworthy of the racial home of the early Britons’; in such a narrative, the Pilgrims were ‘well weaned . . . from the milk of their Mother Country’.\textsuperscript{34} Much the same was apparent in \textit{The Story of Plymouth, for Young and Old} (1909), written by the borough librarian, W.H.K. Wright. Plymouth, he insisted, was ‘the cradle of our Navy, the birth-place of our Empire, the nursery of our Colonial possession’.\textsuperscript{35} Francis Drake, a great son of the region, naturally commanded the most space in Wright’s book, but even the ‘mere accidental circumstance’ of the Pilgrims using Plymouth as their port warranted attention, given how it represented the ‘shift’ of the ‘numerical centre’ of the ‘English-speaking race’ to North America.\textsuperscript{36} The most explicit of these treatments surprisingly came in \textit{A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Plymouth . . .} (c. 1913), a popular travel gazette that went into at least five editions. The ‘Historical Associations’ the \textit{Guide} described were partially a popular way of selling the supposed loveliness of Plymouth at a time when the enthusiasm for the local past of British towns was high.\textsuperscript{37} But the phrase ‘Greater Britain’ – which could be used to denote an Anglosphere of influence that included not just current colonies but English-speaking former territories too – had enough cultural purchase to subtitle a section on Plymouth’s role as the ‘mother’ of the ‘expansion of England’, all the way from the ‘golden days of Queen Bess’ to the ‘colonizing of the New World’, with the Pilgrims as ‘the seed of the American nation’.\textsuperscript{38}

This shift was partly a conscious attempt to tell Plymouth’s story to potential American visitors who, following improvements in transatlantic steamship travel, were increasingly experiencing Britain as tourists; in 1901, for example, \textit{Streets of Old Plymouth} described how the 1891 memorial in Plymouth was already ‘a spot venerated by Americans’.\textsuperscript{39} These books thus said something about how Plymouth saw itself: as a gateway to Empire and, increasingly, the commercial strength of the US; and a place with a history that looked not just inwards but outwards too. Beneath the surface, however, it is evident that the language used alongside ‘Greater Britain’ in these popular histories – of ‘race’, ‘mothers’, ‘seeds’ and ‘birthplaces’ – was indicative of just how important biologically-inflected understandings of ‘Anglo-Americanism’ had become. This development, and the idea that Britain and America had a shared history – or, more spurious, that America’s origins and present power was a literal inheritance from ‘Anglo Saxon’ blood, placing the two countries at the top of a racial hierarchy – led to a ‘transnational collective identity’ and a sense that they were ‘the twin vanguards of modernity’.\textsuperscript{40} Of course, this was less a reflection of reality than a both pseudoscientific and anxious defence of White Protestant power in a time of changing demographics: in the US, migration from southern and eastern Europe (Catholic, Jewish and thus ‘non-Anglo-Saxon’) was overtaking northern European in the final decades of the nineteenth
century; and in Britain, responding to Celtic nationalisms at home and colonial revolts abroad necessitated the maintenance of White English supremacy. But in the dominant rhetoric at least, from a loose sense of a racial brotherhood at one end of the scale to utopian plans for a formalised Anglo-American federation at the other end, the ‘Anglo-Saxons’ were supposedly in charge of the destiny of the world.

Plans for the centenary of the Treaty of Ghent (1814) – which was popularly conceived as the beginning of peace between ‘English-speaking peoples’, and was underpinned by this rhetoric of race and civilization – were interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War. By that time, however, the Anglo-Saxonist fervour was reaching a crescendo. The American entry into the War in 1917 thus cemented the bond between Britain and the US, both in the mind of diplomatic elites and the wider public too. Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* in the final months of the War, Rudyard Kipling declared that the world had seen ‘the second sailing of the Mayflower’, and tentatively asked ‘What shall grow out of her return voyage our grandchildren may, perhaps, comprehend’. It was at this time that W.H. Page, the American Ambassador, gave in Plymouth his widely reported speech, ‘The Union of Two Great Peoples’. ‘Few events in recent history’, according to London’s *Evening Mail*, had been ‘marked by more popular interest than this association of the town with the entry of the United States into the world conflict.’ The Ambassador reviewed the naval troops on the Plymouth Hoe, attended a service at the parish church, and spoke at a public meeting in the Guildhall. Each event ‘attracted very large crowds’, especially the full-regalia civic procession (including the Ambassador) that made its way to the Hoe while the Star-Spangled Banner was played by massed bands. Page – an ardent Anglo-Saxonist – waxed lyrical about the historic associations of the port, and his pleasure in standing ‘near the place where the Mayflower last left land’. He could see, he claimed, that the assembled locals and naval men were ‘the same race of people, kindred to them . . . who sailed away to carry your ideas of freedom into the New World’. To cheers, he announced: ‘We bring back that same idea of freedom for the relief of the imperilled freedom of the world.’

**The Mayflower Tercentenary and the civic pilgrim apotheosis**

Allied victory, and American influence in the ensuing diplomacy and reconstruction, meant the nearing of the 300th anniversary of the *Mayflower* voyage was an ideal opportunity to negotiate and celebrate the blossoming of Anglo-American relations. Plymouth took a leading role; the town had cemented itself as a premier Pilgrim location for American tourists for at least three decades, and was eager to continue its boasting. Yet in reality, despite nonconformity having also been strong in seventeenth-century Plymouth, there was no evidence that the town had actually played any role in the life of the Pilgrims beyond being an accidental final point of departure. That civic boosters still claimed a central place for Plymouth had already been judged in the 1890s as ‘not dignified’ by the people of Southampton, the original port of departure. Throughout the twentieth century, and to the present day too, this dominant association of the Pilgrims with Plymouth has provoked ire – especially in those regions of England that had actually been home to the original settlers. Though, as I have argued, the association had already begun to grow in the late nineteenth century, it was in the circumstances of the tercentenary that the link in the popular imagination was truly cemented. For
geographic reasons, Plymouth had been one of the key military bases of the War, with American forces taking over Victoria Wharf and making it a home for over 3,000 men (as well as two destroyers and sixty submarines). This simple fact – and the fortuitous name recognition of the settlement in Massachusetts – meant ‘Old Plymouth’ was the obvious place for a celebration and reflection upon the Anglo-American military alliance. Ensuring it was definitely chosen as such, however, was thanks to the energies of two local figures: James Rendel Harris and Nancy Astor.

Harris was a famous biblical scholar and antiquarian in the early twentieth century, and the son of a Plymouth Congregationalist minister (though he himself had converted to Quakerism). In the 1910s he turned his inventive historical approach to the Mayflower, claiming, rather fancifully, to have discovered the last resting place of the ship’s timbers in the roof of a barn in a quiet Quaker village in Buckinghamshire. In 1918 it was Harris who: called for ‘the great reunion of English speaking people’ in a commemoration of the Pilgrims that would straddle the Atlantic; chaired the Mayflower Council of England; brought the extensive network of nonconformist churches on board; and championed Plymouth as the site of the celebration. The other important agitator was Nancy Astor, the first woman to take her seat in the House of Commons. Even before her 1919 election, Astor was an active figure in Plymouth’s civic culture with her husband Waldorf Astor (the outgoing MP). American by birth, she claimed a ‘spiritual connection with Plymouth and saw the city as her Virginian home in England’, and portrayed herself as a ‘returning Pilgrim’ – a clever way of challenging anti-American jibes about her commitment to her new home. Astor also admitted she was an ‘unregenerate Anglo-Saxon’ and maintained a strong faith in the Anglo-American relationship, as reflected in the title of her collection of speeches, My Two Countries (1923). Through her role as the vice-president of the Plymouth Committee of the Anglo-American Society, she ensured both that Plymouth was the focal British point of the tercentenary and that her own contribution to its staging was not forgotten either.

The ensuing celebrations used ‘notions of historical lineage’ and the prestige of the American connection to shape a sense of civic power and identity in the present. During the summer a string of receptions, parties, and excursions took place, to which only a limited number were invited, consisting mostly of the civic elite and distinguished Americans. According to the Observer newspaper, this was so the visitors – men like Benjamin Brewster (Bishop of Maine) or Professor Benjamin Bacon (Yale University) – could ‘go home and tell their friends about the friendships they had made’ – which would presumably have both political and economic benefits for Plymouth. At the same time, the tercentenary was an opportunity for the civic elite to orchestrate a performance of authority to the inhabitants of the city. The mayor could be found at multiple events connected to the celebrations – the laying of foundation stones of new buildings, for example, or attending both Anglican and nonconformist church services with a Mayflower theme. Other civic displays were more spectacular. Great processions, which ended with amplified speeches before large crowds, were an opportunity for the city council to dress up in their civic finest, led by the mayor as ‘super squire’ (see Figure 1 for a sense of the size of the public gatherings). These events took place in areas that either signalled Plymouth’s importance as a harbour and military base or the long history of government in the city. The main tercentenary ceremony, for example, happened in the harbour in front of the Mayflower memorial and the ‘Mayflower Steps’ from where
the ship had supposedly set sail. The civic elite mingled with American visitors, before the British National Anthem and Star-Spangled Banner were played by the Royal Garrison Artillery Band. The mayor then announced to the cheering crowd that telegrams would be sent to the King and the President of the United States, expressing 'the hope that the unity and friendship established may long continue amongst the nations for the furtherance of peace and prosperity throughout the world.'

Interwar civic rituals that mimicked the deference ethos of their Victorian antecedents were often unsuccessful in their attempt to reify a prewar civic order. To stand a chance of success in the semi-democratised conditions of post-First World War Britain, then, urban governors had to incorporate the larger population in the celebration. Fulfilling this objective in Plymouth was the creation of a wider programme of public events that went beyond the parties and dinners of the Anglo-American elite. Concerts, swimming competitions, and football tournaments were more about fun and festivity than power or politics, encouraging the whole community to get involved and a sense of urban cohesion to flower. The local press was eager to draw attention to this purpose, operating as a 'municipal booster'. Leading the way was the Western Morning News, the title with the biggest circulation in the region in 1920. Founded in 1860 as politically independent but with Liberal leanings, by the late nineteenth century its sympathies had become more
Conservative.\textsuperscript{64} Regardless, successive editors were an active part of the civic elite, largely supportive of the council whatever party was in control, and happy to use the pages of the newspaper to advance the interests of the town. Thus Thomas Canning Baily was not just the editor (1902–1920) but a ‘leading personality in connection with several Plymouth bodies’, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Mercantile Association, that ‘had for their object the promotion of the prosperity of Plymouth in the commercial sense’.\textsuperscript{65} The newspaper, unsurprisingly, was fully behind the tercentenary – a symbol, it argued, of Plymouth’s enthusiasm for history and civic pride, and an example of the city doing ‘full justice to itself’.\textsuperscript{66} The local population did seem to get into the spirit of things; ‘the traders led the way’ in flying ‘flags of all nations’, and ‘private resident[s]’ also responded ‘loyally to the Mayor’s request that they should decorate their dwellings.’\textsuperscript{67} The whole town, then, was turned into a festival: the streets were decorated; schools and businesses closed, so children and employees could take part; and thousands of visitors flocked to Plymouth’s core to see it on show.

If a large part of the tercentenary was about one town looking inwardly during a dislocating post-war reconstruction, there was also a higher goal: cementing the bond between the US and Britain. This rhetoric permeated the events and speeches that took place. When J. Butler Wright spoke to the assembled crowds, after receiving the silver Mayflower model on behalf of the late-Page, he assured them that the Mayflower symbolised how the two countries must ‘always move forward; bows straight ahead, breasting the adverse currents of misunderstanding, jealousy, and insidious propaganda’ – a nod to the spectre of the Russian revolution, and industrial unrest in both Britain and the US – and how they should ‘be impelled by the same courtesy and impelling winds of understanding and common sentiment which filled those sweeping silver sails.’\textsuperscript{68} During the united religious service at the Guildhall, the prominent Wesleyan Methodist Rev Scott Lidgett declared ‘The Mayflower went out as an act of separation. We want to see the Mayflower return laden with its treasure as an act of international peace and religious reunion’.\textsuperscript{69} Plymouth’s prestige was heightened by similar messages pouring into the city from outside. Replying to the mayor’s telegram, the King added his ‘fervent hope that the problems arising out of the reconstruction of the world may be solved in a spirit of mutual forbearance and understanding to the advantage of the English-speaking peoples.’ Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who was the patron of the Mayflower Council, sent a telegram that declared the Pilgrim ‘spirit’ was ‘just as much needed now’ so as to ‘revive in the minds of the modern world the ideals of which the Puritan Fathers stood so steadfastly’.\textsuperscript{70} Each of these messages were read out at the mayoral banquet, reaffirming the central role the council played in ensuring the prosperity of the city.

The Anglo-American relationship was told most forcibly, and with the greatest detail, in an ambitious re-enactment: ‘the Historical Pageant of the Mayflower’.\textsuperscript{71} Around 300 local men, women and children took performing parts and, with 18 performances (2 added following unexpected demand) and a venue capacity of 2400, it seems likely that around 30,000–40,000 people saw a performance. It was written and produced by the Rev Hugh Parry, who had served in France and Germany as an army chaplain.\textsuperscript{72} Parry was Minister of a London Chapel and already experienced in producing historical plays with a religious bent; he was commissioned by the Mayflower Council and the National Council of Free Churches.\textsuperscript{73} The pageant was an allegory of religious freedom across
the Western world, told for the most part in an episodic chronological narrative: from secretive Separatist meetings in Scrooby to the congregation’s establishment in Leiden, then from Plymouth to the east coast of the Americas. In the epilogue to the pageant, the moral of the story was spelled out. Looking into a crystal ball, two of the main characters described what they saw: ‘men marching and counter-marching by swift millions . . . the frontiers and the boundaries of old aristocracies broken . . . the landmarks of vast Empires removed . . . the People beginning their own landmarks, and all others being removed.’ One then spotted the ‘old Mayflower’ returning ‘eastward and homeward’, symbolising the American entry during the First World War. The stage darkened, while Angels blessed the ‘adventurers and discoverers’ and ‘the faithful and the Army of God’. In the following finale this theme was heightened, with the ‘Pilgrim Spirit’ portrayed through the entrance of the British Empire, Allied and neutral forces of the First World War, and the allegorical figure of Liberty. A Pilgrim came forward and praised Liberty for her ‘all-conquering power for truth, conscience, and just victory’, as, in the background, the symbol of the crucifix flashed.74

To what degree was this civic-internationalist agenda accepted in 1920? Well, the notion that Plymouth – past or present – was responsible for contemporary American power was likely forgotten by visiting elites the moment they got back on the ship or boarded the train for London; the port was more realistically just one of many places that could be used to physically embed the Anglo-American narrative at this time.75 More important, however, was how the Pilgrims could be used to promote Plymouth as an important place to its own inhabitants. The tercentenary was organised by a middle-class elite-dominated civic culture that undoubtedly crafted a ‘positive’ narrative that downplayed rather than revealed societal tensions. ‘Notes in the West’, the regular column for the editorial line of the *Western Morning News*, consistently echoed not just the Anglo-Saxon English-speaking friends-across-the-Atlantic ideology of the tercentenary, but also documented the tercentenary’s success and attraction to Plymothians (and published the supportive letters of its readers).76 The mayor also argued that the pageant was one of ‘the leading and most interesting features of the Mayflower celebrations, a clean and educational entertainment which had enabled many thousands of Plymothians to become conversant with the history of the Pilgrims.’46 There were some voices of dissent, however, like George Miller, of the Plymouth Board of Guardians: he lamented, after the mayor failed to attend a tea put on for 500 inmates of the workhouse, that ‘the organisers of the Mayflower celebrations had forgotten the existence of poor people in Plymouth’. The Ratepayers’ Association too, from a different (and predictable) angle, voiced some mild grumblings about the cost to the public purse of the celebrations.77

Local appreciation, nonetheless, could be seen from the attendance that the tercentenary gained; and non-local press reports abounded with descriptions of the enthusiastic reception for the pageant performers from the grandstands (though, of course, many of these spectators would have been friends and family given the size of the cast). According to the *Observer*, at least, the pageant was the most ‘effective’ means of ‘bringing home to Plymouth people the historical and political significance’ of the *Mayflower* voyage.78 What audiences actually thought of civic rituals is difficult to gauge; their presence, as Ben Roberts has reminded us, could ‘be dependent on something as minor as personal mood and attitude, rather than engagement with the broader themes of an event’.79 The *Times* certainly noted that there was ‘more anxiety locally on the prospects of the Pageant
than respect for the feelings of the vanished Pilgrims’, and there is evidence from other pageants of this period that the nuances of the history portrayed were often lost beneath the spectacular sounds and sights of modern theatre. At the least, however, the historical pageant demonstrates there was some currency in the idea that the Mayflower was an appropriate symbol for Plymouth and its place in the modern world – even if this was fleeting or operating at only an inward looking civic level.

The decline of the Anglo-American pilgrim

Mayflower interest in Plymouth did continue apace into at least the mid part of the century, as both the Anglo-American relationship and the enthusiasm for localised expressions of history remained strong. In 1934, after some local discussion, a new memorial to the Pilgrims was erected at the Barbican. The Old Plymouth Society, made up of the great and good of the region, had led the campaign, being concerned that the existing slab memorial was a ‘mean and unworthy effort’ and ‘inadequate . . . for so important an international event as the branching off and birth of a new nation’. Opinions differed about what to do: the Western Morning News crusaded for a grander monument; the Astors wanted a properly ‘international’ memorial, and suggested asking for donations from Americans; and Sir Philip Pilditch, an influential member of the Old Plymouth Society, thought that such international begging would make the city appear ‘small in the eyes of the nations of the world’. In the end, the town council kept costs above all in mind, and used a donation of £235 from a local benefactor to pay for the fairly restrained structure (Figure 2). In its design, a simple Grecian portico,

Figure 2. Historical re-enactors at the neoclassical Mayflower monument, as part of the 350th anniversary commemoration. Photograph by Western Morning News. The Box, Plymouth: 3488/2349.
it consciously mimicked one of Plymouth, MA’s Pilgrim memorials, which in turn was an example of the dignified neoclassical aesthetic of the American City Beautiful movement. The Western Morning News supportively described it as ‘symbolic of the spirit that moved the Puritans in its sturdiness and lack of adornment . . . a white gateway to the ocean’, but the Old Plymouth Society reacted sniffily, in their annual report, that ‘It was a matter of deep regret . . . that sufficient time was not allowed to mature a considered scheme for the production of a Mayflower memorial commensurate with its object – the commemoration of an event of international importance.’ A civic parade, nonetheless, made its way to the unveiling, where a ‘large and distinguished gathering’ – including many American representatives – witnessed the mayor pulling off the Union Jack and Stars and Stripes to reveal the monument below.  

The ritualistic speeches accompanying the new memorial, however, also held tentative notes that the Anglo-American meaning of the Mayflower was not entirely solid. Despite the gathered Americans and iconography of the Stars and Stripes, the mayor’s speech to the crowd focused more on how the ‘Mayflower spirit’ had ‘made England what it is’, comparing the country’s liberty to those where ‘the Press is muzzled, hush-hush meetings have to be held, [and] the Dictator holds sway’. As diplomatic relations in Europe again began to sour, it was more important for Plymouth’s mayor that the supposed democratic credentials of the Pilgrims – now imagined as an example of constitutional rather than religious freedom – be remembered instead of their ‘Anglo-Saxon’ ancestry. Into the Second World War and during its aftermath especially the newly dubbed ‘Special Relationship’ did come back to the fore; American Ambassadors and soldiers alike made visits to the memorial, especially on Independence Day or Thanksgiving, and the surrounding area steadily became built up with new plaques and tablets that remembered the Anglo-American alliance. But the power or popular purchase of the Mayflower narrative in Plymouth continued to move further away from the tercentenary’s ethos as the century wore on. After the elation of the Allied victory had faded, so too, as Sam Edwards puts it, did ‘memories of wartime blood brotherhood’. Enthusiasm for Anglo-Saxonism also dampened in the 1940s, as the horrifying results of Fascistic biological racism became clear. Similar shifts had meant the Pilgrims were less useful in the US too; already by 1920 it was becoming apparent that the supposed Anglo-Saxon heritage of the Pilgrims was contentious when the demographic and geographical locus of power was shifting away from WASPish small town New England and towards multicultural cities; the tercentenary was, in a sense, the last gasp of a dying dynasty. Thus, after the Second World War, though there was still some value in diplomacy built on a culture of ‘English-Speaking Peoples’ as Winston Churchill now famously promoted, it was not a culture the Pilgrims could popularly represent in Plymouth.

Shorn of its Anglo-American diplomatic power, and with a significant mid-century decline of the nonconformist communities that had held the Pilgrim torch, the memory of the Mayflower in Plymouth has become a more commercial than civic or religious opportunity for the city. When the 350th anniversary came around in 1970, an ever-greater age of mass consumerism, it was a marketing free-for-all – Pilgrims’ passports for sale, an Americans ancestor tracing service, firework shows, commemorative crockery (Figure 3) and so on. As a special feature in The Times reported, this was a ‘sales pitch . . .
transatlantic oriented’ in a time of growing economic distress. The jet aircraft developments that made transatlantic travel easier, however, had also ended the days of giant American cruise liner’s docking in Plymouth’s harbour, and thus limited the primary tourist audience; after the event failed to capture the public imagination, some cynical locals dubbed it ‘Mayflop ’70’. That said, civic functions and parades, visiting American dignitaries and re-enactments (Figure 3) did still accompany this commemoration; they were just on a smaller scale and lacked the civic grandeur of the 1920 commemoration, arguably reflecting the decline of municipal power and prestige in the post-Second World War period (‘Plymouth was now ruled from outside’, as local historian Crispin Gill put it in 1979). ‘Mayflower400’, though lamentably disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic, had a similar commercial flavour – not surprisingly given the touristic goals of the public-private organisation that has led the commemoration. But the 400th anniversary has also been an opportunity for a more critical debate about what the Pilgrims mean today, and – in response to accusations of ‘colonial whitewashing’ early on in the commemoration’s planning – what they and their descendants actually did in the past. In 1920, there

Figure 3. ‘Mayflower’ 350 souvenirs (1970). The Box, Plymouth: 3488/3764.
was no room in Plymouth’s triumphalist celebration of Allied victory for the Native peoples who had been displaced by Western colonists in the centuries following the Mayflower’s voyage. One hundred years later, a Wampum belt, created by the descendants of the Wampanoag people who first encountered the Pilgrims, has toured the trail trod by American ambassadors in generations past, and an exhibition in a Plymouth’s Box museum tells a more critical story of European colonisation in North America.94

Conclusion

Popular understandings of the urban past were a vital tool in the armoury of the civic elite from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. By making claims to historical importance, a range of agendas in the present could be shored up: municipal power and authority; the legitimacy of Christian belief in civic life, both Church of England and nonconformist; and the promotion of the local economy, whether through tourism or attracting outside investment. The use of the Mayflower in Plymouth demonstrates each of these facets, and also shows how parochial expressions of patriotism could fruitfully intermesh with stories that also ‘belonged’ to other nation states. The power of the Mayflower story in Plymouth also tells us something more, however: how the urban past could service an international diplomatic agenda. If only for fleeting moments, Plymouth’s connection to this seventeenth-century story of colonial expansion was pushed into service as a demonstration of the longevity of the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ world, and an example of how ‘the Special Relationship’ has often had cultural and historical underpinnings. The very urban fabric of Plymouth’s Hoe and Barbican – and the historical role these locations had played – became rhetorically joined to the foundation of the US, and, by extension, the intervention of that new global power in the First World War. Historical pageants and parades romanticised this relationship, while plaques and memorials left it fixed in time and space. Discourses, however, do not always last as long as stone and brass. As the twentieth century wore on, the dampering of enthusiasm for the racialised ancestral aspect of the Pilgrims on both sides of the Atlantic meant they were no longer a useful symbol of Anglo-American diplomacy. Nonetheless, the Mayflower has remained an aspect of local heritage and tourism in Plymouth and, in the present day, one way that historians can reinterpret the contentious legacies of the colonial past.

Notes

1. ‘Gulf of 300 years bridged’, Western Morning News, 7 September 1920, p. 5.
2. The Union of Two Great Peoples: A Speech by W.H. Page . . . Delivered at Plymouth, 4 August 1917 (London, 1917).
3. T.G. Otte (ed), The Age of Anniversaries: the Cult of Commemoration, 1895–1925 (London, 2017) gives a useful recent global perspective.
4. Simon Gunn, The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority in the English Industrial City, 1840–1914 (Manchester, 2000) focused on Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds, and influenced a generation of urban historians who extended his approach to other cities and periods, like Charlotte Wildman, Urban Redevelopment and Modernity in Liverpool and Manchester, 1918–1939 (London, 2016), Tom Hulme, After the Shock City: Urban Culture and the Making of Modern Citizenship (Woodbridge, 2019), and Tosh
Warwick, ‘Middlesbrough’s steel magnates: business, culture and participation, 1880–1934’, PhD thesis submitted to University of Huddersfield (2014).

5. Patrick Joyce, Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, c. 1848--1914 (Cambridge 1991), pp. 180–82.

6. Brad Beaven, Karl Bell and Robert James, ‘Introduction’, in Beaven, Bell and James (eds), Port Towns and Urban Cultures: International Histories of the Waterfront, c. 1700–2000 (Basingstoke, 2016), p. 4. See also Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal, and Kären Wigen (eds), Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges (Honolulu, 2007). Both of these volumes note the tendency of historical port studies to focus on mercantile and military perspectives rather than ‘cultural turn’ approaches.

7. Bennett notes the lack of research on Plymouth’s history, but demonstrates the importance of naval identity to the town’s civic culture: G.H. Bennett, ‘Dockyard, naval base and town: the social and political dynamics of Plymouth 1800 to 1950’, in O. Auge and D. Tillman (eds), Kiel und die Marine 1865–2015: 150 Jahre Gemeinsame Geschichte (Kiel, 2017). See Brad Beaven, Visions of Empire: Patriotism, Popular Culture and the City, 1870–1939 (Manchester, 2012) for Leeds, Coventry and Portsmouth; and Michael Reeve, “An empire dock”: place promotion and the local acculturation of imperial discourse in “Britain’s third port”, Northern History, 58, no. 1 (2021) on Hull.

8. For the use of historical culture in Anglo-American diplomacy, see Sam Edwards, ‘“From here Lincoln came”: Anglo-Saxonism, the special relationship, and the anglicisation of Abraham Lincoln, c. 1860–1970’, Journal of Transatlantic Studies, 11, no. 1 (2013), pp. 22–46 and ‘Warton, George Washington and the Lancashire roots of the Anglo-American “special relationship”, c. 1880–1976’, Northern History, 55, no. 2 (2018), pp. 206–234. See also Donald M. MacRaidl, Sylvia Ellis and Stephen Bowman, ‘Interdependence day and Magna Carta: James Hamilton’s public diplomacy in the Anglo-world, 1907–1940s’, Journal of Transatlantic Studies, 12, no. 2 (2014), pp. 140–162 and Steven Franklin, ‘Magna Carta: public commemoration, celebration, and meaning’, PhD thesis submitted to Royal Holloway (2020).

9. “The breaking waves dashed high”: the life and afterlife of Felicia Hemans’ ‘The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England” (1825), Voyaging through History: the Mayflower and Britain, accessed https://voyagingthroughhistory.exeter.ac.uk/2019/03/08/the-breaking-waves-dashed-high-the-life-and-afterlife-of-felicia-hemans-the-landing-of-the-pilgrim-fathers-in-new-england-1825/ 18 May 2021.

10. As the Birmingham Gazette explained in October 1854, when Lucy’s painting was exhibited there, it was a ‘celebrated and deeply interesting picture’ that had ‘created such great interest in London, Manchester, [and] Liverpool’. Aris’s Birmingham Gazette, 23 October 1854, p. 3.

11. See Anne B. Rodrick, Self-Help and Civic Culture: Citizenship in Victorian Birmingham (Farnham, 2004).

12. The historiography of the place of the Pilgrims in American culture is extensive; the most comprehensive treatment remains J. Seelye, Memory’s Nation: The Place of Plymouth Rock (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998).

13. There was ‘an awakened’ and ‘growing interest’ in their topic – including investigations into the Pilgrims. The New England Historical and Genealogical Register, vol. 1 (1847), iv. As Paul Langford has shown, American views of the British were multifarious during the early to mid-nineteenth century; there was certainly a substantial subsection of society, based in New England, that celebrated the inheritance of English tastes and behaviour. See Paul Langford, ‘Manners and character in Anglo-American perceptions, 1750–1850’, in Fred M. Leventhal and Roland Quinault (eds), Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership (Aldershot, 2000).

14. Joseph Hunter, Collections concerning the Church or Congregation of Protestant Separatists formed at Scrooby in North Nottinghamshire in the Time of King James I: The Founders of New Plymouth the Parent Colony of New England (1854), preliminary notice.

15. William Bradford, History of Plymouth Plantation, ed. Charles Deane (Boston, 1856).
16. Kim Stevenson and Judith Rowbotham, ‘Union Street: more than simply a metaphor for the coming together of Plymouth’s Three Towns?’ in James Gregory and Daniel Grey (eds), Union and Disunion in the Nineteenth Century (London, 2019).
17. See Joyce, Visions of the People, 180–2. For the older origins of such histories, see Rosemary Sweet, The Writing of Urban Histories in Eighteenth-century England (Oxford, 1997).
18. Such as A Handbook for Travellers in Devon and Cornwall, 6th edition (London, 1865), 69. Plymouth was first connected to London through the South Devon Railway in 1849. In 1859 the main railway line from Plymouth to Truro was completed and the Tavistock and South Devon line also opened from Plymouth; the latter eventually also connected the town to the capital via the London and South-Western Railway.
19. Richard Nicholls Worth, History of Plymouth from the Earliest Period to the Present Time (Plymouth, 1871), p. iii and p. 31.
20. Worth, History of Plymouth, 61. An even fuller treatment in the same vein came just two years later in Llewellyn Jewitt, A History of Plymouth (Plymouth, 1873), pp. 156–161.
21. Gunn, Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class, ch 2.
22. ‘Plymouth’s new Guildhall’, Western Morning News, 12 August 1874, p. 3.
23. ‘The new guildhall at Plymouth’, Western Morning News, 28 July 1870, p. 2.
24. Margaret Bendroth, The Last Puritans: Mainline Protestants and the Power of the Past (Chapel Hill, NC, 2015) details the American side of this equation, plus some of the Congregationalist excursions to Britain.
25. ‘Plymouth town council’, Western Courier, West of England Conservative, Plymouth and Devonport Advertiser, 26 November 1851, p. 2.
26. Gunn, Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class, ch 5; Ian J. Shaw, High Calvinists in Action: Calvinism and the City, Manchester and London, 1810–1860 (Oxford, 2002).
27. Calculated from figures in Worth, History of Plymouth (1890 edition), pp. 266–7.
28. Robert Coad Serpell (1870–1), Baptist; Alfred Rooker (1873–4), Congregationalist; Edward James (1878–9), Wesleyan Methodist.
29. W. Whittley, Sermons on the Panels of the New Guildhall, Plymouth (Plymouth, 1875), p. 2.
30. ‘Plymouth town council’, Western Morning News, 10 September 1891, p. 5.
31. ‘The Pilgrim Fathers’, Western Morning News, 28 July 1891, p. 8.
32. For the context, see Iestyn Adams, Brothers Across the Ocean: British Foreign Policy and the Origins of the Anglo-American ‘Special Relationship’ 1900–1905 (New York, 2005); for the Bradford manuscript, see Erik Goldstein, ‘Diplomacy in the service of history: Anglo-American relations and the return of the Bradford history of Plymouth Colony, 1898’, Diplomacy and Statecraft, 25, no. 1 (2014). The classic text remains Bradford Perkins, The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895–1914 (New York, 1968).
33. MacRaidle et al., ‘Interdependence day and Magna Charta’ (2014), pp. 141–2. See also Melanie Hall and Erik Goldstein, ‘Writers, the clergy, and the ‘diploimatisation of culture’: sub-structures of Anglo-American diplomacy, 1820–1914’ in John Fisher and Antony Best (eds), On the Fringes of Diplomacy: Influences on British Foreign Policy, 1800–1945 (Farnham, 2011).
34. Henry Francis Whitfield, Plymouth and Devonport: In Times of War and Peace (Plymouth, 1900).
35. W.H.K. Wright, The Story of Plymouth, for Young and Old (Exeter, 1909), p. 6. As Robert James has argued, using Plymouth as a case study, naval port towns ‘held a particular status in the national psyche’ and, particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century, were the site of ‘cultural nation-building’ using the Royal Navy as a point of pride. Robert James, ‘“If there’s one man that I admire, that man’s a British tar”: leisure and cultural nation-building in a naval port town, c. 1850–1928’ in Port Towns and Urban Cultures, quotes at 187 and 182.
36. Wright, The Story of Plymouth, 82. A statue of Drake was unveiled in Plymouth in 1884.
37. For this local history discourse, see Paul Readman, ‘The place of the past in English culture c.1890–1914’, Past and Present, 186 (2005, 147-199).
38. A Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to Plymouth, Stonehouse and Devonport (London, c. 1913), 31. For context, see Duncan Bell, The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860–1900 (Princeton, NJ, 2007).
39. Charles E. Eldred and W.H.K. Wright, Streets of Old Plymouth (Plymouth, 1901), p. 62.
40. David G. Haglund, 'Is there a “strategic culture” of the Special Relationship? contingency, identity, and the transformation of Anglo-American relations', in Alan P. Dobson and Steve Marsh (eds), Anglo-American Relations: Contemporary Perspectives (Abingdon, 2013), p. 26; and Srdjan Vucetic, The Anglosphere: A Genealogy of a Racialised Identity in International Relations (Stanford, CA, 2011), p. 24.
41. Sam Edwards, ‘A great Englishman’: George Washington and Anglo-American memory diplomacy, c. 1890–1925’, in Robert Hendershot and Steve Marsh (eds), Culture Matters: Anglo-American Relations and the Intangibles of ‘Specialness’ (Manchester, 2020), p. 161.
42. There is now an extensive historiography on Anglo-Saxonism, race and Anglo-America. As well as citations above, see: Duncan Bell, Dreamworlds of Race: Utopia, Empire and the Destiny of Anglo-America (Cambridge, 2020); Stuart Anderson, Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895–1904 (Rutherford, NJ, 1981); and Paul Kramer, ‘Empires, exceptions and Anglo-Saxons: race and rule between the British and United States empires, 1880–1910’, Journal of American History, 88, no. 4 (2002), 1315–1353. Clive Webb, ‘More colours than red, white and blue: race, ethnicity and Anglo-American Relations’, Journal of Transatlantic Studies, 18 (2020), pp. 443–6, provides a useful historiographical overview.
43. Michael Patrick Cullinan, ‘100 years of peace among English-Speaking people: Anglo-American cultural diplomacy, 1909–1921’, Peace & Change, 46, no. 1 (2021), 5-34).
44. Rudyard Kipling, ‘The second sailing of the “Mayflower”’, Daily Telegraph, 17 August 1918.
45. ‘The union of two great peoples’, Evening Mail, 6 August 1917, p. 6. Page also celebrated the Anglo-Saxon links of Britain and the US when he unveiled a Pilgrim Fathers Memorial in Southampton in 1913. See Tom Hulme, ‘Memories of the Mayflower in Southampton’, Hampshire Papers, no. 8 (2020).
46. The Mayflower had originally set sail from Southampton, but had been forced back to Plymouth (via Dartmouth) after its sister ship, the Speedwell, sprung a leak.
47. ‘Notes by the way’, Hampshire Advertiser, 28 July 1894, p. 6.
48. Adrian Gray, Restless Souls Pilgrim Roots: the Turbulent History of Christianity in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire (Retford, 2020) and Graham Taylor, The Mayflower in Britain: How an Icon was Made in London (Stroud, 2020) have both recently tried to remind us about the limitations of a focus on Plymouth.
49. John Van Der Kiste, Plymouth (Stroud, 2009), p. 109; Crispin Gill, Plymouth: A New History. Vol II: 1603 to the Present Day (Exeter, 1979), p. 183.
50. James Rendel Harris, The Finding of the Mayflower (Manchester, 1920). For Harris’s approach to history-writing, see Martha Vandrei, ‘Why should not citadels become academies’: transatlantic tercentenaries, higher education, and local pasts in Britain after the First World War’, History (forthcoming).
51. ‘Pilgrim Fathers’, Western Morning News, 15 March 1918.
52. Lisa Berry-Waite, “I stuck to Plymouth, Plymouth stuck to me”; Nancy Astor, electioneering and female parliamentary candidacy’, in J. Turner and D. Grey (eds), Nancy Astor, Public Women and Gendered Political Culture in Interwar Britain, Open Library of Humanities, 6, no. 2 (2020).
53. ‘Speech before the English Speaking Union in Plymouth’, in Nancy Astor (ed), My Two Countries (New York, 1923), p. 91.
54. ‘Mayflower Tercentenary’, Western Morning News, 5 March 1920, p. 8. Astor’s garden party for the great and the good was widely reported and even filmed (for showing as a newsreel in cinemas), and was undoubtedly the most exclusive event of the commemoration. Astor’s ‘behind the scenes’ importance is emphasised by Judith Rowbotham, ‘Mayflower 300, Plymouth and Nancy Astor: the beginnings of a modern Anglo American partnership’ unpublished paper delivered to IHR International History Seminar, 13 October 2020. Astor
was one of many elites motivated by servicing the Anglo-American relationship in this period – Lord Lothian, with whom Astor was a firm friend, gives another example. See Priscilla Roberts, 'Lord Lothian and the Atlantic world', The Historian, 66, no. 1 (2004), 97-127.

55. Reeve, 'An empire dock', p. 7.
56. 'The “Mayflower” Fetes at Plymouth', Observer, 5 September 1920, p. 11. A list of the American guests was printed in 'Brilliant gathering', Western Morning News, 4 September 1920, p. 8.
57. H. Whitfield, 'Mother Plymouth': A Souvenir of the Mayflower Tercentenary together with the story of the Pilgrim Fathers, 1620–1920 (Plymouth, 1920).
58. 'Mayflower pageant', Western Morning News, 28 August 1920, p. 5. John Garrard defines the 'super-squire' as the figure who personified municipal government and represented corporate authority within the city – a lasting remnant of Victorian civic rituals. John Garrard, Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns 1830–80 (Manchester, 1983), 30.
59. 'Imposing scenes', The Western Morning News, 7 September 1920, p. 5.
60. Brad Beaven, 'Challenges to civic governance in post-war England: the Peace Day disturbances of 1919', Urban History, 33, no. 3 (2006). Elites failed to understand the popular feelings (and discontent) of Peace Day; riots, and even the burning down of Luton’s town hall, was the result.
61. For the adaptive culture of British cities after the First World War, see Tom Hulme, After the Shock City: Urban Culture and the Making of Modern Citizenship (Woodbridge, 2019).
62. Ben Roberts dates this shift towards a more leisure-focused ritual as the 1890s-1900s, and argues the interwar period saw a gradual shift towards street parties rather than large central events (like those of the Mayflower tercentenary discussed here). Ben Roberts, 'Entertaining the Community: the Evolution of Civic Ritual and Public Celebration, 1860–1953', Urban History, 44, no. 3 (2017), pp. 452–6.
63. See Michael Bromley and Nick Hayes, ‘Campaigner, watchdog or municipal lackey? Reflections on the inter-war provincial press, local identity and civic welfarism’, Media History, 8, no. 2 (2002), pp. 197–212.
64. Crispin Gill, 'The Western Morning News 1860–1985', Rep. Trans. Devon. Ass. Advmt Sci., 117 (1985), pp. 195–226.
65. 'Death of Mr T. Canning Baily', Western Morning News, 5 November 1925, p. 4.
66. 'Imposing scenes', p. 5. 
67. 'Plymouth pageant', Western Morning News, 2 September 1920, p. 3.
68. 'Imposing scenes', The Western Morning News, 7 September 1920, p. 5. In the immediate post-war period in the US, the lessons of the Pilgrims were used both to justify and challenge the supposed radicalism of trade unions. See Christine Arnold-Louise, 'Baby Pilgrims, sturdy forefathers, and One Hundred percent Americanism: the Mayflower Tercentenary of 1920', Massachusetts Historical Review, 17 (2015), pp. 42–44.
69. 'Notes in the West', The Western Morning News, 7 September 1920, p. 5.
70. 'Mayoral banquet', The Western Morning News, 7 September 1920, p. 5.
71. For more on interwar booster pageants, see Tom Hulme, ‘A nation of town criers’: civic publicity and historical pageantry in inter-war Britain, Urban History, 44, no. 2 (2017).
72. Hugh Parry, The Historical Pageant of the Mayflower (London, 1920).
73. Such as Hugh Parry, The Historical Pageant of Non-Conformity, as produced at the Royal Horticultural Hall, (London, 1912) and The Historical Pageant of Faith and Freedom (London, 1926).
74. Parry, The Historical Pageant of the Mayflower.
75. For the geographically widespread use of Anglo-American and Anglo-Saxon rhetoric during the Tercentenary, see the map of commemorations at ‘Voyaging through History: the Mayflower and Britain’ http://humanities-research.exeter.ac.uk/voyagingthroughhistory/geolocation/map/ Accessed 14 May 2021.
76. See, as examples, 'Notes in the West', Western Morning News, 13 May 1920, p. 5 and 'Notes in the West', Western Morning News, 21 July 1920, p. 5.
77. ‘Overlooked in Mayflower celebrations’, Western Morning News, 13 September 1920, p. 5; ‘Plymouth town council proposals criticised’, Western Morning News, 24 July 1920, p. 8.
78. ‘The “Mayflower” fetes at Plymouth’; ‘Pageant presents’, Western Morning News, 13 September 1920, p. 8.
79. Roberts, ‘Entertaining the community’, p. 449.
80. ‘Mayflower pageant’, The Times, 2 September 1920, p. 11. See Hulme, ‘A nation of town criers’, for a discussion of pageant audience reception.
81. ‘Mayflower stone inadequate’, Western Morning News, 19 January 1934, p. 5. At the same time, members of the Old Plymouth Society were certainly conscious of promoting the local economy; one, in reference to the debate about the new Mayflower monument, asked ‘why the stream of gold passing through Plymouth in the way of visitors en route from America to London’ was being better ‘tapped’. See ‘Fourth Annual Meeting of the Old Plymouth Society... 19th of January 1934’ in The Old Plymouth Society, Minutes, 2336/39, The Box, Plymouth.
82. ‘Mayflower memorial’, Western Morning News, 24 May 1934, p. 5 and 8.
83. ‘Memorial after 314 years’, Western Morning News, 6 September 1934, p. 6 and p. 8.
84. Ibid.
85. For an overview of this landscape’s development, see Robert Hendershot, ‘An Anglo-America narratives in public space: evaluating commemoration and generational transmission of the Special Relationship’, Culture Matters pp. 193-5.
86. Edwards, ‘From here Lincoln came’, pp. 36–7.
87. In 1920, as detailed by Arnold-Lourie, the commemoration tended to encourage ‘100 percent Americanism’, and preserved ‘an ideal of colonial history that seemed to exclude minority groups and newer arrivals to America’, which did provoke protest from non-WASP communities who actually formed the majority population of Massachusetts. Arnold-Lourie, ‘Baby pilgrims, sturdy forefathers, and one hundred percent Americanism’, pp. 47–8. Seelye, Memory’s Nation, argues the tercentenary was the last gasp of Pilgrim dominance in the US.
88. Alan P. Dobson and Steve Marsh (eds), Churchill and the Anglo-American Special Relationship (London, 2017).
89. Ross McKibbin, Classes and Culture: England, 1918–1951 (Oxford, 2000), pp. 281–3.
90. ‘How they will mark historic voyage’, The Times, 8 May 1970, p. 15; Mayflower 70: Plymouth Plans for Celebrating the 350th Anniversary of the Voyage of the Pilgrim Fathers to America (Plymouth, 1970).
91. Gill, Plymouth, p. 269. For the local response, see the collected newspaper cuttings in Mayflower 70, anniversary, 3642/225-228, The Box, Plymouth.
92. Hulme, After the Shock City, pp. 198–214. Quote: Gill, Plymouth, p. 269.
93. ‘Our Sponsors’, Mayflower400 – accessed online 20/04/2021 at https://www.mayflower400uk.org/about/our-sponsors/.
94. ‘Wampum: Stories from the Shells of Native America’, The Box, Plymouth (2020) – accessed online 20/04/2021 at https://www.theboxplymouth.com/whats-on/wampum.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Martha Vandrei, Roger Ottewill, Sam Edwards and the Cultural and Social History reviewers for their helpful feedback on previous versions of the article.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).
Funding

This work was supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council under grant AH/R007896/1.

Notes on contributor

Tom Hulme is a Senior Lecturer in Modern British History at Queen’s University Belfast, where he works broadly on urban culture and the place of the popular past. His first book, After the Shock City: Urban Culture and the Making of Modern Citizenship, was published in 2019 by Boydell. He is the principal investigator of ‘Voyaging through Britain: the Mayflower and Britain’, https://voyagingthroughhistory.exeter.ac.uk/