

Shared Experience Workshop and the Impact of Centre for Hidden Histories Research Projects



Shared Experience Workshop, Derby.

On 19th September 2016, academic and community participants in research projects funded by the Centre for Hidden Histories convened for a Shared Experience Workshop at Derby Riverside Centre. The day was organised by Centre for Hidden Histories staff at the University of Nottingham, Dr Larissa Allwork (Impact Fellow), Mike Noble (Community Liaison Officer) and Professor John Beckett (Principle Investigator). Participants presented their findings and discussed their experiences of working as part of an AHRC Connected Communities First World War Engagement Centre. The specific focus of the day was the ‘impact’ of participants projects or what the AHRC defines as, “...*the ‘influence’ of research or its ‘effect on’ an individual, a community, the development of policy, or the creation of a new product or service. It relates to the effects of research on our economic, social and cultural lives.*” This report will reflect on presentations at the Shared Experience

Workshop in order to highlight the multitude of social, cultural, political and economic impacts created by the Centre for Hidden Histories research projects both within the UK and internationally. In highlighting the impact of these projects, this report strongly supports Lord Stern’s recent recommendation for REF 2020 that impact case studies should, “*include impact on government policy, on public engagement and understanding, on cultural life, on academic impacts outside the field, and impacts on teaching.*” The Shared Experience Workshop highlighted three key themes which have emerged as animating ‘Hidden Histories’ research funded by the Centre between 2014 and 2016, and which dovetail with the Centre’s proposed 2017-2019 themes of population mobilities, trauma and memorialisation.

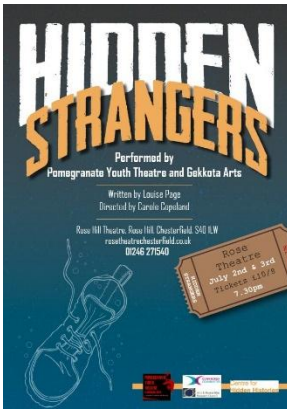


Kurt Barling and student.

The first theme concerned the World War One experiences of Britain’s diaspora populations and the contribution of members of its colonies to the conflict. **Kurt Barling** (Middlesex University) and **Judith Garfield’s** (Eastside Community Heritage) project, ‘Hidden Heroes of Empire – Black Soldiers in the Middlesex Regiment’ used holdings at the National Archives in Kew and the National Army Museum in order to reveal the contribution of black British soldiers to the Middlesex regiment. The impact of the project included a pop-up exhibition which toured secondary schools in the Greater London area. Illustrating the reach of the project over 400 teachers and students were surveyed by Barling

and Garfield in relation to their responses to the exhibition, while MP for Tottenham, David Lammy and MP for Enfield, Joan

Ryan visited the exhibition in schools. The exhibition was also put on public display for Black History Month at Bruce Castle Museum in Tottenham. The popularity of the display meant that its run was extended to June 2016. In addition, and coalescing with the recent Stern Review’s (2016) recommendation that impact should include the changes to teaching brought about by research innovation, Barling, a former BBC broadcast journalist, trained undergraduate media and film students at Middlesex University to make ‘Hidden Heroes’, a sixteen minute documentary film about the archival findings of the project. Furthermore, **Professor Jane Chapman** in a project with **The Race Equality Centre**, Leicester has sought to increase awareness of overseas contributions by non-European communities to the First World War. This project has thus far particularly focused on the World War I experiences of Afro-Caribbean and Chinese communities.



The second theme explored by participants in the Shared Experience Workshop related to the experiences of German and Austrian immigrants living in the UK and the British government's internment of so-called 'enemy aliens' during the First World War as a result of the Aliens Restrictions Act (1914). The workshop featured five presentations which relate to this challenging topic which is often overlooked in more heroic narratives of World War One history. **Dr Natalie Braber** (Nottingham Trent University) and **Louise Page** (University of Salford) collaborated on the production of Pomegranate Youth Theatre's play, 'Hidden Strangers'. Page, whose ancestors were affected by the anti-German backlash during World War One, told Shared Experience Workshop participants about how her script for 'Hidden Strangers' evolved. She visited archives with young people from

across Derbyshire and then developed dramatic improvisations. These improvisations explored historical events such as the anti-German Lusitania riots of May 1915. For Page, the importance of young people participating in 'Hidden Strangers' resides in the fact that they are encouraged to encounter diversity in a different way. Page also made the point that participation in the play had also enhanced young peoples team working, archival, creative and communication skills. Developing the reach of her project, Page wants the script of 'Hidden Strangers' to be Creative Commons licensed, so that other youth theatre groups can perform the play. Braber's involvement in research related to internment continues through her community partnership with **Dr David Amos**, who has a new project on the World War One experience of Harworth Colliery. The Colliery was a part of the Anglo-German North Union Mining Co Ltd. The founder of this Anglo-German mining company, Arnold Lupton was interned during the war for his pacifist views and personal protests against the internment of Harworth's German workers. The Centre looks forward to the further development of this project.



Knockaloe Pilates community event

Centre for Hidden Histories projects addressing the topic of 'enemy aliens' and internment have also benefitted from the fact that member of the Centre's Academic Network, **Professor Panikos Panayi** is an international specialist in the

history of internment in Britain during World War One. His

book, *Prisoners of Britain: German Civilian and Combatant Internees during the First World War* was published by Manchester University Press in 2012, and his edited collection *Germans as Minorities During the First World War: a Global Comparative Perspective* was released by Ashgate in 2014.

Panayi (Leicester DeMontfort University) and **Alison Jones** (Knockaloe & Patrick Visitor Centre) introduced their heritage and public engagement work in relation to the history of Knockaloe Farm, Britain's largest World War I internment camp. Located on the Isle of Man, Knockaloe interned 24,000 in-mates, including individuals of German, Austrian and Turkish origin during the First World War. The impact of the Knockaloe project has included a campaign to preserve the Old Patrick Schoolroom as a permanent Visitor Centre, which would feature a database of internees for use by descendants and historians. The research for this database is being carried out at the moment. The Knockaloe and Patrick Visitor Centre is also encouraging public engagement with this history through its website, outreach to schools and community events such as a mass Pilates class (10 September 2016). This brought together approximately 800 islanders and descendants of Knockaloe of all ages and mobilities to remember the legacy of former internee, Josef Pilates.

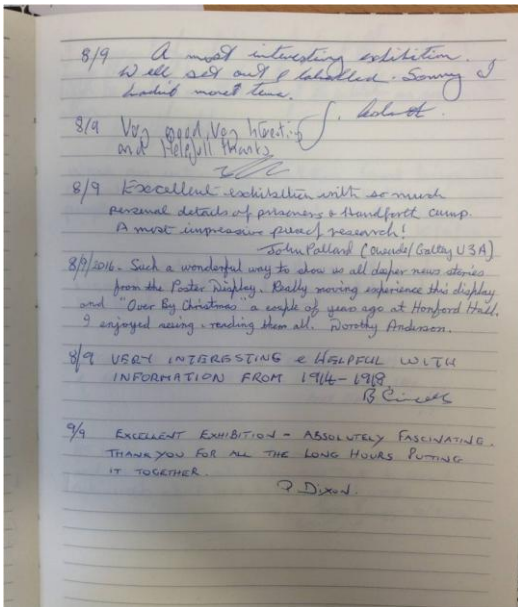


David Stowe with visitors at Lofthouse Park Heritage Open Day.

Internationalising the reach of the Centre for Hidden Histories, **Dr Claudia Sternberg (University of Leeds)** and **David Stowe** have been exploring cross-cultural histories of internment with the 'In the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time' project. This project encompasses a comparative study of German and Austrian civilians interned at Lofthouse Park camp, UK and British internees at the Ruhleben camp, Germany. The site of Lofthouse Park has all but vanished but public engagement with this history has been enhanced through initiatives such as a Heritage Open Day (11 September 2016). The Heritage Open Day attracted 80 – 100 visitors, including local

community members (community activists, school students, local clergy), descendants and representatives of the project based in Berlin, Leicester, Kent, Sheffield and Leeds. The day received coverage on BBC Radio Leeds. The project has also contributed to the creative economy.

This is through the commissioning of a number of performance and visual arts based initiatives. These include a film, 'Family Display', a performance by theatre group Heritage Corner called 'Hut 21' and Mary Kemp's archival research for a concert which uncovered a wide range of musical composition in Ruhleben camp. A group of Berlin school students will be visiting Leeds and Wakefield to increase their knowledge of Ruhleben through archival research in the Liddle Collection next year (27 February - 3 March 2017).



Handforth exhibition visitor feedback

Also rooted in exploring a former site of internment is Dr Tim Grady's (University of Chester) project with Ian Clark (Handforth Parish Councillor, 2013 – present) which has attempted to increase local community knowledge and engagement with the First World War history of Handforth Prisoner of War Camp in Cheshire. The project has resulted in a website and an exhibition in Handforth town library (5 - 10 September 2016), which addressed the history of the camp and the diversity of experiences of those interned. The exhibition attracted approximately twenty to thirty people per day and visitor's views about the exhibition were captured in an exhibition comments book.

The third theme explored by Shared Experience Workshop participants was the experiences of refugees during the 1914-1918 conflict. The history of Belgium refugees in Cheshire during the First World War was tackled by **Ann Marie Curtis**, a representative of St Werburgh's Great War Study Group. This is the community partner of academic, **Dr Hannah Ewence** (The University of Chester). Ewence's project has successfully joined up with the Heritage Lottery Fund project, 'Diverse Narratives of World War I', which explores the presence of various minorities in First World War era Cheshire. 'Diverse Narratives' has provided a range of workshops on historical research skills, exhibition production, and digital communication to St. Werburgh's and other community groups. These workshops have enhanced the archival skills of participants and have provided training in exhibition creation and multi-media technologies. The Belgium refugees in Cheshire project has increased public consciousness of the historical experiences of this group through a combination of heritage initiatives and partnerships with industry. The discovery of the unmarked graves of two Belgian children in a Northwich Cemetery motivated one community partner to petition global business, Tata Chemicals, to help pay for gravestones.



'Diverse Narratives' touring exhibition.

Tata were a major employer of Belgians in the region during the First World War, and are funding two gravestones which will be consecrated in November. The ceremony is expected to be attended by representatives of the Belgium Embassy and other local MPs and dignitaries. The stories of Belgium refugees have also been integrated into a 'Diverse Narratives' touring exhibition, which has appeared in Cheshire public spaces such as market squares and shopping centres. Over 600 people have seen the exhibition and demonstrating the contemporary

relevance of the project, one visitor commented, *"Why is this type of history generally not taught at school? It seems really important to help us and our children understand all the diversity in Britain today. The exhibition has changed the way I think about the First World War."*

As evidenced by these examples, the impact of the Centre for Hidden Histories had been UK wide, and has encompassed broader international networks. From the Berlin connections of the 'In the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time' project to Irfan Malik's research on Dulmial village's contribution to World War I, which has caught the attention of the Pakistani diaspora. The Centre for Hidden Histories has also not shied from tackling difficult topics that still have contemporary resonance today - the challenges and exclusions of British memorial culture, the experiences of refugees, the UK's need to acknowledge its imperial past and confront its own histories of prejudice, racism and xenophobia, which continue to trouble the nation's liberal, democratic values. Moreover, the types of impact produced from Centre for Hidden Histories projects strongly coalesces with the Heritage Lottery Fund's aims for First World War commemoration. Namely, the Centre has diversified the range of community perspectives offered on the history of World War One; it has reached out to young people; it has contributed to the recognition and/or preservation of heritage sites such as Knockaloe, Lofthouse Park and Handforth; it has encouraged the development of skill-sets that have brought benefits to both community partners and academics. For example, university undergraduates have been taught media skills; secondary school students have honed their performance practice; community members have connected with the history of their home region; volunteers have benefitted from research and multi-media skills workshops. These skills and experiences comprise what Keri Facer and Bryony Enright would call the lasting 'embodied' legacies of the Centre for Hidden Histories. These legacies contribute to the ongoing vitality of individual learning experiences and enable dialogues about difficult pasts both within and between diverse UK communities.

A second article in this series will summarise the main findings of the Shared Experience Workshop afternoon discussion session. In reflecting on these discussions, the Centre for Hidden Histories will be responding to grass-roots experiences, which suggest the benefits, challenges and best practice techniques in constructing academic and community co-produced research projects.

Larissa Allwork
Impact Fellow, The Centre for Hidden Histories, October 2016