

Institution: University of Chester		
Unit of Assessment: 28 History		
Title of case study: Revealing Diverse Narratives of the First World War to Inspire Communities to Research, Share and Act		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2010 – present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Hannah Ewence Tim Grady	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Dr, Senior Lecturer Professor	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2012 – ongoing 2008 – ongoing
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 – 2019		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Diverse Narratives transformed perceptions of the First World War through an exploration of the experiences of minority groups. An exhibition, hands-on teacher training and a website (<https://www.diversenarratives.co.uk/>) combined to reshape public understanding of the conflict in the UK and beyond. Training was provided for PGCE students, who taught some 400 History pupils and produced teaching packs for the website increasing understanding of this complexity amongst trainee teachers and their schools. This public engagement also inspired policy changes: it prompted an international company to renovate refugee graves, and parish councils to investigate the history of minority groups.

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Speaking in 2012, the former British prime-minister, David Cameron, called for a “truly national commemoration” to mark the centenary of the First World War. Cameron’s words reflected a long-standing tendency in public discourse, but also in academic writing, to view the conflict through a national lens, focusing resolutely on the nations and their governments at war. Yet, the populations, and thus armies, of all the belligerent powers were actually incredibly diverse, consisting of national, ethnic and religious minorities.

Over the last decade, the work of Professor Tim Grady and Dr Hannah Ewence has focused on recognising the existence of these minority groups, drawing attention to their full and active participation in the conflict, and analysing their experiences of war. Grady’s 2011 book [1], for example, was the first complete study of the history and memory of Jewish soldiers in the German military. His second (2017) book highlighted the strong wartime relationship between Jews and other Germans [2]. The importance of this research has received extraordinary international recognition, with his second book shortlisted for both the Wolfson and Cundill History Prizes. Building on their combined expertise in the history of minorities, Ewence and Grady organised a major international conference at the University of Chester on ‘Minorities and the First World War’ in April 2014. This resulted in a transnational history of minorities in the First World War in 2017 [3].

Despite raising international awareness of these diverse histories amongst academics, Grady and Ewence remained frustrated that public discourse about the First World War continued to focus on older, national narratives of the conflict. To address this concern, they used the 2014 conference to initiate an academic-community partnership focused on minority experiences of the war in Cheshire, entitled: ‘Diverse Narratives of the First World War’.

Backed by external funding from AHRC World War One Engagement Centres and the Heritage Lottery Fund, Ewence and Grady established genuine community partnerships. Members of parish councils, churches and local community groups received training in archival research in order to explore topics ranging from internment camps through to Belgian refugees. At the same time, Ewence and Grady held dedicated sessions briefing PGCE students on the material, which allowed them to deliver specialist secondary school lessons on the histories of minorities in the

Impact case study (REF3)

conflict. This material, along with the community research, featured in freely accessible public and educational resources – a website, a touring exhibition, and teaching packs.

The 'Diverse Narratives' project shifted focus from the national story by drawing the attention of the public in Cheshire to the regional and transnational experiences of minority groups in the county. Participants undertook transnational archival research in Britain and Continental Europe to uncover the diverse narratives of people passing through the county as workers, prisoners of war, or refugees. In doing so they produced resources of international significance, which has been utilised both nationally and internationally. To close the circle, Ewence [4,5] and Grady [6] published articles and a chapter demonstrating how the experience of minorities in Cheshire reverberated through Britain and Europe at the conflict's end.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

1. Tim Grady, *The German-Jewish Soldiers of the First World War in History and Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011).

- Peer-reviewed book, awarded *proxime accesit* for the Gladstone Prize of the Royal Historical Society. Can be supplied on request.

2. Tim Grady, *A Deadly Legacy: German Jews and the Great War* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2017).

- Peer-reviewed book shortlisted for the Wolfson History Prize 2018 and the Cundill History Prize 2018. Listed in REF 2.

3. Hannah Ewence and Tim Grady, (eds), *Minorities and the First World War: From War to Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). Can be supplied on request.

4. Hannah Ewence, 'Belgian Refugees in Cheshire: "Place" and the Invisibility of the Displaced', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 36 (3) (2018), pp. 232-57.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619288.2018.1536880>

- Peer-reviewed journal. Listed in REF 2.

5. Hannah Ewence, 'Bridging the Gap between "War" and "Peace": The Case of Belgian Refugees in Britain', in H. Ewence and T. Grady (eds), *Minorities and the First World War: From War to Peace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 89-113. Can be supplied on request.

6. Tim Grady, 'Landscapes of Interment: British Prisoner of War Camps and the Memory of the First World War', *Journal of British Studies*, 58 (3) (2019), pp. 543-64.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2019.7>

Peer-reviewed journal. Listed in REF 2.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

From its very inception, Diverse Narratives has been a collaborative project linking community groups, students and academic historians. The project has helped to complicate and diversify public knowledge of the First World War, while at the same time increasing community engagement with local histories. It has achieved this impact in five overlapping ways: training, exhibitions, primary and secondary education, memorialisation and digital dissemination.

First, as most of the initial volunteers, had never previously conducted primary research, Ewence and Grady ran monthly research training workshops during 2016. These focused on everything from the use of physical archives and digital repositories through to source analysis. The skills learnt empowered the community volunteers, enabling many of them to conduct historical research for the first time, including in the National Archives in Kew. One volunteer even used his new skills in public talks. "The lasting legacy for me is that next week I shall be giving my fourth presentation, with pictures, of the Belgian refugees with the proceeds going to the Royal British Legion", he commented [1].

Second, the Diverse Narratives ‘pop-up’ exhibition, used 18 display boards to introduce the wartime experiences of seven minority groups to members of the public who may not conventionally visit heritage sites. Also, to help reinvigorate the ‘High Street’, the exhibition was primarily shown in empty retail units. Between May 2016 and November 2018, it toured 17 different venues across Cheshire, from the Pyramids Centre Birkenhead in the west through to the Grosvenor Centre Macclesfield in the east, reaching some 650 people in total [2].

In running the exhibitions, students and community volunteers, supervised by Ewence and Grady, all gained valuable experience of heritage management and curation. However, the real significance of the exhibitions came from the response of the public, when confronted with a different history of the First World War. One visitor welcomed the focus on “the contributions other communities and diverse cultures have had on our past and our future”, while another asked that the exhibition become a “permanent museum” [2].

A third strand of the Diverse Narratives project focused on education. Through a unique partnership with the University of Chester’s Education and Children’s Services Department, Ewence and Grady introduced project material to some 25 trainee history teachers. The trainees then produced lesson plans and workshops, designed to introduce Year 7 and Year 8 pupils to local history, minority experiences and primary sources. As a number of trainees remarked, this experience has made them “more confident” using primary material in lessons and encouraged them to teach “different aspects” of the war [3].

In February 2017 and July 2018, the trainee teachers ran Diverse Narratives days at four local secondary schools. On each occasion, an entire year cohort participated, exposing over 400 pupils to a different wartime history. The response from the participating schools – both pupils and teachers – was excellent [4]. At Elfed High School in Flintshire, for example, the Head Teacher praised how the event had encouraged “discussions among pupils across all of the years”, while the Head of History at Chester’s Catholic High reported that the number of pupils opting to take History increased [5]. This collaborative model is now embedded in the Key Stage 3-4 curriculum of five local schools, where PGCE students develop the Department’s latest research findings for bespoke day-long workshops.

Such was the success of the Diverse Narratives education days that Grady and Ewence undertook further collaborations with Chester and Cheshire West Council and the British Legion. In November 2018, they worked with both organisations in running a children’s First World War writing competition and in the same month contributed to a primary school conference on the war in Chester, attended by 30 pupils. The crucial thing about both events, as the Lord Mayor of Chester remarked, was that they introduced children to “the unknown history” of the war [6].

The project’s fourth main strand focused on the absence of minority groups from sites of memory. In November 2016, Ewence and Grady managed to return the names of three Belgian refugees to the memorial landscape. After one of the project’s volunteers, Alan Lowe, discovered the unmarked graves of two Belgian children in Northwich, Ewence and Lowe worked with TATA Chemicals to fund new headstones. After the dedication ceremony, which was led by the Belgian Consul, TATA praised the project for revealing a forgotten aspect of the company’s heritage [7]. A similar initiative in Chester led to the erection of a headstone over another unmarked Belgian grave. Ann Marie Curtis, who volunteered with the project, campaigned for the headstone, which was finally erected in 2017 and is now blessed annually by a local Catholic priest [1].

The fifth and final strand of Diverse Narratives utilised digital media to bring the project to an audience beyond Cheshire. Ewence, Grady, students and community volunteers all made their research accessible through blogposts on the project website: <https://www.diversenarratives.co.uk/>. With over 12,000 visits from across Europe and beyond, the website, along with the project’s Twitter account, has stimulated conversations both with relatives and the public more generally [8]. One of the project’s most exciting international conversations occurred when the grandson of Constant Wauters, a Belgian soldier who died in Chester in 1915, learnt of his family’s history from a BBC Radio Merseyside interview with Ewence. Following

further discussions with Ewence, Wauters went on to publish the family's history in Dutch and English [9].

The digital platforms were also at the forefront of a series of interactive talks that Ewence and Grady ran in conjunction with Chester's Grosvenor Museum during June 2018. Encouraged by a local radio feature, 80 people took part in the talks, which used material culture alongside digital sources to illustrate Cheshire's diverse wartime history. The events left a lasting impression with the audience who praised the focus on the "previously hidden history" of the war and the role of minorities locally [10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Community volunteer feedback
 - Available as a pdf.
2. Visitor feedback from 'pop-up' exhibitions, 2016-2018.
 - Available as a pdf.
3. Written feedback from History trainee teachers and programme leader on Diverse Narratives school visits.
 - Available as a pdf.
4. Feedback questionnaires from year 8 school pupils after participating in Diverse Narratives days.
 - Available as a pdf.
5. Letters and emails of thanks from schools participating in the Diverse Narratives days, 2017-2018.
 - Available as a pdf.
6. Letter of thanks from the Lord Mayor of Chester.
 - Available as a pdf.
7. Newspaper articles, including: Chester Chronicle, Cheshire Life, *Northwich Guardian*, 30 November 2016.
8. Project website user statistics: <https://www.diversenarratives.co.uk/>
 - Available as a pdf.
9. A relative of a Belgian soldier, 'Constant Wauters: 11th of March 1915', (Grembergen, 2018):
 - Available as PDF
10. Audience questionnaires and feedback from Diverse Narratives interactive talks held in conjunction with the Grosvenor Museum, Chester:
 - Available as a pdf.