

Institution: University of South Wales		
Unit of Assessment: 28 History		
Title of case study: Wales and Atlantic Slavery: redressing historical amnesia		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2008 to present		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Chris Evans	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of History	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1993 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2017 to 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case-study is about the decolonisation of historical knowledge in the age of Black Lives Matter. Specifically, it is about how research by Evans on the suppressed history of Wales and Atlantic slavery has been used to extend public understanding and affect the ways in which public bodies handle a difficult, contested past. The impact takes three principal forms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) supporting change in curatorial practice at the National Museum of Wales, a family of seven museums dedicated to different aspects of the Welsh past and culture (ii) improving the range and quality of information available to communities affected by the legacy of Atlantic slavery (iii) informing the Welsh Government's policy on the memorialisation of Atlantic slavery and British imperialism 		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The case study draws upon pioneering research by Evans on the relationship between Atlantic slavery and industrial development in Europe, with a particular focus on Welsh industry, first reported upon in 2010 in <i>Slave Wales: The Welsh and Atlantic Slavery, 1660-1850</i> (R1). This book revealed for the first time the significance of Welsh woollens in the slave Atlantic between the 1680s and the 1840s. These fabrics, known as 'Welsh Plains', were used in the procurement and maintenance of enslaved workers. Using material in British and US archives, Evans was able to demonstrate how Welsh Plains were (i) traded for captives on the Guinea coast, and (ii), more importantly, sold in large volumes to planters in the Caribbean and North America. Here, marketed as "Negro Cloth", Welsh Plains were used to clothe enslaved workers. This was reported in R1 and R3.</p> <p>This was a previously unsuspected finding, but it is of a piece with much recent research on the material functioning of the Atlantic slave complex. It dovetails with other scholarship that points to the profound effects that the provisioning needs of the plantation world (its demand for food, fuel, packaging, processing equipment, etc.) had on parts of the world that were, on a superficial view, detached from Atlantic slavery. Evans' research therefore reinforces the claim that mass enslavement in the New World was in no way aberrant in an age of gathering modernity (conventionally characterized as a contractual, free-labour phenomenon). On the contrary, enslavement <i>was an expression of emergent modernity</i>.</p> <p>This is also research that intersects with a generation's worth of scholarship that sees the manufacturing and trading of textiles as powering global integration in the early modern era. Evans' work offers a way of linking the history of Welsh rural industry, a story traditionally told in the most insular of ways, into an expansive global narrative. It runs in parallel with the work Evans has conducted on the Welsh copper industry of the eighteenth century, which,</p>		

by supplying sugar processing and distilling equipment, also had vital links to the plantation world.

Evans continues to contribute to this field of scholarship, both through publication (see **R2**, **R4**, and **R5**) and through the organisation of conferences, notably *Clothing the Enslaved in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World*, hosted by the National Museum of Wales in 2019 with support from the Pasold Research Fund.

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

Research by Evans on the provisioning of the plantation world has been in progress for fifteen years. The outputs underpinning the impact are:

(**R1**) *Slave Wales: The Welsh and Atlantic Slavery 1660-1850* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010)

- This book was the first scholarly examination of the relationship between Wales and Atlantic slavery. This study contributed directly to the claimed impact.

(**R2**) 'The plantation hoe: the rise and fall of an Atlantic commodity', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 69: 1 (2012), 71-100

- Winner of the 2016 Douglass Adair Memorial Medal of the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, the Jack Temple Kirby Award of the Southern Historical Association for 2013, and (as co-winner) the Lester J. Cappon Prize for the best article published in *The William and Mary Quarterly* in 2012. This article is part of Evans' ongoing investigation of the slave Atlantic provisioning system in the eighteenth century.

(**R3**) 'Slavery and Welsh industry before and after emancipation', in Catherine Hall, Keith McClelland and Nick Draper (eds), *Emancipation and the Remaking of the British Imperial World* (Manchester University Press, 2014), pp. 60-73

- This essay was part of the publishing programme associated with the acclaimed *Legacies of British Slave-ownership* project at University College London. This study contributed directly to the claimed impact.

(**R4**) [with Göran Rydén] '"Voyage iron": an Atlantic slave trade currency, its European origins, and West African impact', *Past & Present*, 239 (2018), 41-70

- Winner of the Best Article Prize of the Forum on European Expansion and Global Interaction for 2019. This article is part of Evans' ongoing investigation of the slave Atlantic provisioning system in the eighteenth century.

(**R5**) [with Louise Miskell] *Swansea Copper: A Global History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020)

- This book contains a sustained analysis of the linkages between the Welsh copper industry and the Caribbean sugar sector. It is part of Evans' ongoing investigation of the slave Atlantic provisioning system in the eighteenth century.

FUNDING

R1, **R2**, and **R3** were based on research funding awarded to Evans by:

- *John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Library, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation*: Gilder Lehrman Fellowship. 2009.
- *Pasold Research Fund*: Seed-corn funding for the project '"Negro Cloth": an Atlantic commodity from Wales'. 2008.
- *Virginia Historical Society*: Betty Sams Christian Fellowship. 2008.
- *Institute of Southern Studies, University of South Carolina*: Visiting Fellowship, 2006.

R4 was based on research funding awarded to Evans and Göran Rydén (Uppsala University) by:

- *Riksbankens Jubileumsfond*. Project title: 'Places for Making and Places for Taking: Metals in the Global Eighteenth Century'. 2013-2016. Value: £368,000.

R5 drew upon research funding awarded to Evans by:

- The *Leverhulme Trust*. Project title: 'A World of Copper: Globalising the Industrial Revolution'. 2012-2013. Value: £122,814.
- *Hagley Museum & Library*. H.B. du Pont Fellowship at the Center for the History of Business, Technology, and Society. 2011.

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

USW research has supported change in curatorial practice at the National Museum of Wales. In 2017, in an act of 'decolonisation', the National Museum launched a review of its social history collections. To quote the Principal Curator, Contemporary & Community History, 'we began to critically address the absence of slavery in the interpretation at some of our industrial museum sites. To undertake this review, we were hugely reliant on Professor Evans's published works and his on-going research into Welsh plains' (**S1**).

The use of Evans' research was one aspect of an increasingly close relationship between the University of South Wales and the National Museum of Wales. The two signed a memorandum of understanding in 2018, responding to the [Well-being of Future Generations Act Wales](#) (2015), which requires public bodies in Wales to consciously counteract persistent inequities in wealth, health, and access to cultural resources.

Evans' work on Wales and Atlantic slavery responds to that agenda by **improving the range and quality of information available to communities affected by the legacy of Atlantic slavery**. It serves as a bridge between community activism and the articulation of new narratives of the Welsh past within the National Museum of Wales and other cultural institutions. Most notably, Evans' book *Slave Wales* was the inspiration for a community research project, [From Sheep to Sugar: Welsh Wool and Slavery](#), supported by the National Heritage Lottery Fund in 2019-2020. The project was based in North and Mid-Wales, the heartland of Negro Cloth production, and directed by Learning Links International, a social enterprise specialising in educational initiatives linking Wales to the Caribbean and Africa. One of the directors of Learning Links International offers this testimony (**S2**):

"This idea was based by the challenge made by Professor Chris Evans in his book *Slave Wales*... that 'The mostly mute landscape must be made to speak'... The Learning Links International team approached Prof. Evans to ask for his support as we took up the challenge and prepared an application for funding... The support of Prof. Chris Evans was therefore fundamentally important as we embarked on explaining this history in context."

Evans introduced the project at a launch event in Shrewsbury in May 2019, the historic conduit between rural weavers in mid-Wales and international markets. Community research groups were subsequently established in Bangor, Machynlleth, Dolgellau, Glyn Ceiriog, and Shrewsbury. Fifty-seven volunteers were recruited to conduct research on Negro Cloth and to disseminate knowledge of this overlooked Welsh product. The project's volunteers were all trained using Evans' *Slave Wales* as a set text. Evans also undertook two tours in Mid- and North Wales in summer 2019 on behalf of Learning Links International, meeting volunteer researchers, and liaising with the institutional stakeholders, such as the Jamaica Wales Alliance, Race Council Cymru, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, and Shropshire Archives, which have supported the volunteers in their work. Evans' role in *From Sheep to Sugar* was highlighted in the project's final report to the National Heritage Lottery Fund (ref. OH-18-03009), and the project has been recognised as an exemplary response to the Well-Being of Future Generations Act by the Learned Society of Wales, the national academy for arts and sciences, in its 2020 report [Wales Studies: Research about Wales, for Wales and the World](#), p. 13) (**S3**).

There have been direct cultural outcomes. The award-winning Welsh-language writer [Angharad Tomos](#), who attended one of the *From Sheep to Sugar* public events, was inspired to write a Young Adult novel, *Y Castell Siwgr* [The Sugar Castle] (2020), which explores the links between Wales and Jamaica through its two teenage protagonists, one free and one enslaved (**S4**).

“I was going to write a novel about [Jamaican plantation owner] Lord Penrhyn. Then I heard your talk in Llanberis Slate Museum about the Negro Cloth/ Welsh flannel - which was new to me - so I decided to write about two young girls - 15 year olds, - Dorcas is from a weaving family in Dolgellau - who goes to work as a maid in Penrhyn Castle and the other one is Ebony, an enslaved girl in Jamaica... thanks for the inspiration... it was very important for me to know that. Instead of blaming 'the other' for slavery...it made me realise how intricate the pattern is”

Tomos also acknowledge the importance of Evans' work in [promotional material](#) for *Y Castell Siwgr* (in Welsh).

Evans has also been able to engage with contemporary craft practitioners who have participated in the *From Sheep to Sugar* project. *From Sheep to Sugar* inspired several contemporary practitioners, recruited via weavers', spinners', and dyers' guilds in Wales and the West of England, to imaginatively recreate Negro Cloth. One textile artist, Jennifer Hodgeman, having read Evans' *Slave Wales*, designed a textile installation, “Sugar(sic)k”, which was exhibited at The Weir Garden, a National Trust property in Herefordshire that attracts 35,000 visitors annually, in 2019 (**S5**).

Further artistic collaborations, scheduled for 2020, are now in abeyance because of Covid-19.

- Text by Evans was to have been incorporated into an installation by [Barbara Prezeau Stephenson](#), the internationally acclaimed Haitian visual artist and cultural activist, at the BayArt Gallery, Cardiff (**S6**).
- The history of Negro Cloth was also to have featured in the exhibition *Brethyn (Cloth)* at The Turner Art Gallery (a wing of the National Museum of Wales), Penarth (**S7**).
- Emily Laurens, co-director of Feral Theatre, is using the [Egin Residency](#) awarded her by National Theatre Wales to develop a theatre piece that explores the links between Welsh textiles, the use of coerced labour in the modern fashion industry, and ecological crisis (**S8**).

Cumulatively, this activity has allowed Evans to establish collaborative ties with key curatorial staff at the National Museum. During the winter of 2019-2020 a research assistant working under Evans' direction conducted a search of the National Museum's collections database and archives catalogue for materials that bear upon the repressed history of Wales and Atlantic slavery. Her report was to have informed digital / pop-up exhibitions that would, had Covid-19 not intervened, have been made available to the National Museum site at St Fagans, which attracts an annual [683,000](#) visitors, other outlets in Wales (such as the Newtown Textile Museum), and venues beyond Wales, such as the International Slavery Museum, Liverpool.

The Welsh Government has recognised Evans' expertise and appointed him to public roles as a result. Evans is now acknowledged as a public authority on slavery, industry and landscape in Wales and more widely. This was signalled when, in the wake of Colston Must Fall in Bristol, the First Minister of Wales appointed him to an [investigative commission](#) tasked with auditing public monuments, street and building names in Wales associated with Atlantic slavery. The audit was published in November 2020. It was welcomed by the First Minister with these words:

“Under the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, we have a duty to work towards a Wales which is more equal. To help us do this, we need a clear-eyed understanding of the legacies of the slave trade and the British Empire. This audit provides an important evidence base, which will help us to establish an honest and more informed relationship with our history.” (S9)

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

- S1.** Principal Curator Contemporary & Community History, National Museum of Wales
- S2.** Director, Learning Links International CIC.
- S3.** Senior Executive Officer, The Learned Society of Wales
- S4.** Angharad Tomos, novelist and newspaper columnist
- S5.** Jennifer Hodgeman, textile artist
- S6.** Dr Charlotte Hammond, Lecturer in French Studies, Cardiff University
- S7.** Lewis Prosser, Events and Marketing Coordinator, Penarth Town Council
- S8.** Emily Laurens, Feral Theatre / National Theatre of Wales
- S9.** Mark Drakeford, First Minister of Wales, [Written Statement: The Slave Trade and the British Empire: An Audit of Commemoration in Wales](#), 26 November 2020.