

<b>Institution:</b> University of Lincoln		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 17 – Business and Management Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Boosting the Visitor Economy through Novel Approaches to Managing Difficult Heritage		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2003 - 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>  HUGHES Heather ELLIN Dan PESARO Alessandro	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Professor of Cultural Heritage Studies/Programme Leader Archivist-Content Digital Archivist	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 12 Feb 01 to date 1 Feb 15 to date 15 Apr to date
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2018 onwards		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The team at the University of Lincoln's International Business School applied research insights into how to manage difficult heritage to benefit heritage attractions and their online resources. Their interpretive approach at the new International Bomber Command Centre was based on the core principles of inclusivity, remembrance, recognition and reconciliation. The visitor experience was enriched, which has demonstrably benefited the visitor economy of Lincoln. They have enhanced heritage preservation and online networks based on the same principles, through co-production of a digital archive. The team's research has benefited volunteers' skills and wellbeing. Finally, their model of managing difficult heritage has changed practice in heritage attractions in the UK and abroad.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Difficult heritage refers to interpretations of past events that disinherit particular people because they have been overlooked or because of reluctance to acknowledge their role. The University of Lincoln's International Business School (LIBS) team's research has established a relationship between difficult heritage and the increasing need to grow/diversify online and physical audiences at visitor attractions: the more diverse one's audience becomes, the greater the likelihood that displays and interpretation will be contested and therefore difficult.</p> <p>Research on how difficult heritage can be managed in ways that positively contribute to the visitor economy began with Hughes's exploration of heritage tourism in South Africa. Her work for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission led her to investigate ways in which heritage narratives that had been ignored or deliberately excluded from cultural tourism during the apartheid years might reinvigorate domestic and international tourism after majority rule. She concluded that inclusivity was a vital factor. [3.1; 3.2]</p> <p>This research expertise within LIBS prompted the Lincolnshire Bomber Command Memorial Trust to approach Hughes in 2012 to lead the conceptualisation and delivery of heritage content and interpretation at an intended new visitor attraction devoted to RAF Bomber Command. The Trust wanted to tell a <i>story</i>, which it felt the recently unveiled Bomber Command Memorial in London failed to do.</p> <p>The difficult heritage in this case was that the bombing campaigns of WWII are still capable of provoking strong reaction on both sides of the conflict. Veterans' relatives believed that Bomber Command aircrew had not been given recognition for their very dangerous role, not least because their casualty rate was one of the highest in the Allied armed forces. The issue of Allied bombing of civilians had resurfaced in Germany and Italy as a matter of intense public debate, prompting necessary consideration of how to identify an inclusive approach in this context. The research team devised an action-based project to engage stakeholders and volunteers in the co-</p>		

creation of: 1) an Interpretation Plan, encapsulating key principles of heritage management to guide curatorial decisions; 2) a digital archive to preserve personal memorabilia and eyewitness testimony, since the Trust did not possess any collection to form the basis for the attraction.

It was vital that the Interpretation Plan [3.3] inform the entire project to achieve consistency in the face of strong and often contrary opinions. The team drew on its research experience and consulted widely to produce the principles enabling an inclusive story: from multiple angles – both sides of conflict, in the air and on the ground, military and civilian – not just aircrew in Lincolnshire, as had been the Trust's intention; acknowledging that total war generates painful memories; affirming the roles of those who felt omitted (such as ground personnel and aircrew of colour); focusing on a bottom-up 'people's story'; and a broad-based internationalism to reflect all those caught up in the bombing war. These principles in turn enabled clarification of the core elements of the management of Bomber Command's heritage: remembrance, recognition and reconciliation.

The central components of the International Bomber Command Centre (IBCC) – the digital archive, whose holdings were essential to the exhibition, the exhibition itself, and the memorial – were based on these core principles. Best practice in digital collections management meant that the principles had to be 'wired in' from the very start in early 2015. For example, controlled vocabularies are used to ensure standardisation in the cataloguing of collections. The team's research showed that in dealing with difficult heritage, use of appropriate language and terminology is not merely a technical matter; it is vital to ensure an inclusive outcome. The team therefore designed a new controlled vocabulary [3.4; 3.5; 3.6]

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

- 3.1 Hughes, H. (2003) What is remembered and what forgotten: a decade of redefining culture and heritage for tourism in South Africa. In *Conference on Developing Cultural Tourism, University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK*, 470-479. ISSN1471-1427. Available on request.
- 3.2 Hughes, H. (2007) Rainbow, renaissance, tribes and townships: tourism and heritage in South Africa since 1994. In Buhlungu, S., Daniel, J., Southall, R. and Lutchman, J. (eds) *State of the Nation: South African 2007*. Pretoria: Human Sciences Research Council, 266-288. ISBN 978-0-7969-2166-6. Available on request.
- 3.3 Hughes, H. and Ellin, D. (2015) Interpretation Plan. Document IBCC TS- 01. Available on request.
- 3.4 The IBCC Digital Archive at [Digital archive - International Bomber Command Centre \(internationalbcc.co.uk\)](http://internationalbcc.co.uk).
- 3.5 Fedele, G., Gaiaschi, Z., Hughes, H., and Pesaro, A. (2020) Public history and contested heritage: archival memories of the bombing of Italy. *Public History Review* 27, 1-24. <https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/phrj/article/view/7088>
- 3.6 Pesaro, A. and Emmanuelli, M. (2018) La guerra di bombardamento in Friuli nelle fonti dell'International Bomber Command Centre Digital Archive. *Temi di ricerca e problemi aperti. Storia Contemporanea in Friuli* 48 (47) 223-232 <https://www.ifsml.it/storia-contemporanea-in-friuli?cn-reloaded=1>

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

For heritage attractions to compete in the visitor economy, it is essential to identify strategies to handle difficult subject matter that win the approval of their boards, visitors and funders. The LIBS team's research and its emphasis on inclusivity contributed to IBCC success in five related areas.

**i) Designing a novel and inclusive approach to the difficult heritage of Bomber Command**

The IBCC opened in January 2018 as Lincoln's newest heritage attraction. The Interpretation Plan had included guidance on how best to describe and display exhibits drawing on Hughes' research. For example, rather than apportioning blame for events or attempting to justify them, using the voices of those who experienced them at the time [3.1, p. 13]

The IBCC's Losses Archivist/Trustee was a key participant in the co-creation of the Plan, and states that it '*significantly influenced the way in which I developed the Losses Database*' [which records the details of those killed while serving with Bomber Command]. Whilst every other Bomber Command memorial in the country has a total of 55,573 losses inscribed, in the case of the IBCC, '*The net result of this inclusive approach*' was to increase the number of losses identified to 57,861, all of whose names are recorded on the IBCC memorial walls. The Plan continues to guide the development of the Database [5.1].

**ii) Contributing to the visitor economy by enhancing the visitor experience**

According to the IBCC's Chief Executive, the research team's approach '*has been an important part of the success of the Centre*' [5.2]. It welcomed 218,791 visitors, January 2018-December 2020. Visitor spend was [text removed for publication], excluding donations; using the Association of Independent Museums toolkit, this spend contributed [text removed for publication] per annum to Lincoln's visitor economy. In the IBCC's rolling visitor satisfaction survey, interpretive elements (exhibition, tour guides) have consistently scored over 9 out of 10 and 99% of respondents would recommend the attraction to others [5.2].

Visitors have therefore responded positively to the IBCC's ethos. Its Trip Advisor ranking was #1 of 82 things to do in Lincoln, overtaking the Castle and Cathedral. Of the 729 reviews, 606 rated it 'excellent' and 99 'very good'. The IBCC was rated 4.7 out of 5 across 1,428 Google Reviews (all at 16 January 2021) [5.3].

Among the awards for its interpretive approach and ethos have been Gold Winner, International Tourism category in Visit England Awards for Excellence 2020

(<https://www.visitbritain.org/business-advice/awards/visitengland-awards-excellence-2020-winners>) and Winner of Interpretation Centre at the Association of Heritage Interpretation Awards 2019. The citation reads '*This is difficult heritage and the site has worked hard to interpret this theme in an engaging and thought-provoking manner – just what great interpretation should do*' [5.4]

**iii) Enhancing the preservation of heritage through a digital archive**

The IBCC Digital Archive enabled the collection of a wide variety of material to showcase an 'orchestra' of ordinary people's voices in the permanent exhibition, as well as to provide an online resource for the attraction. It went live in September 2018. By 18 January 2021, 16,786 items had been published, including 1,108 interviews [5.5]. Items from multiple perspectives can be aggregated to tell new stories. An interactive world map links items by place and an interactive timeline by date. Over 800 tags link items by theme. At 16 January 2021, there were 75,886 visitors and 928,924 unique page views [5.5]. The team's inclusive approach resulted in donations from Germany and Italy, for example 100 testimonies of those who experienced the bombing of Kassel from Stadtarchiv Kassel and Pistoia Institute's testimonies of Italian resistance who hid downed airmen [5.5]. This approach has enabled new connections among archive users [5.5].

**iv) Supporting volunteers' wellbeing and skills**

An added challenge is that much of this heritage is at risk. Due to advanced age, the living link to events of the bombing war has been disappearing fast. Once again applying an ethos of inclusivity, the research team trained over 100 volunteers, mostly in the UK (though widely scattered), also Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Italy. They have helped collect oral testimony, scan personal collections, transcribe handwritten letters and create and review metadata. Everyone received training for their chosen tasks and thus acquired digital skills. Their

feedback demonstrates the mutual benefits derived [5.6]. They also report that archive tasks have contributed to 'sound mental health' and 'keeping sane' during the lockdowns [5.6].

#### v) **Creating a model for other heritage attractions**

The research team's model for managing difficult heritage led to changes in professional practice abroad and benefits for volunteers' engagement in other heritage attractions.

- **Changes to exhibition content, management and resource within Italian museums**

Applying LIBS approach internationally presented challenges, particularly in Italy, which entered the war on the Axis side and was bombed by the Allies, thus requiring a different perspective within its heritage exhibitions. LIBS research was successfully adapted by the M9 Museum, the centrepiece of a €multi-million regeneration scheme in Venice ([Museum | M9 Museum](#)). Using the LIBS model, the M9 Curator changed the design scheme of its bombing war installation from Italian perspectives only to include international material from the IBCC Digital Archive [5.7]. Parco Nord/Ecomuseum in Milan is located on a vast expanse of reclaimed industrial land, including the former Breda aircraft factory. The management changed the interpretive scheme of their visitor centre and wartime air raid shelter from a local perspective to include a data visualisation of the European bombing war that the LIBS research team developed for the IBCC. '*Milan was heavily bombed during the Second World War, and this step has a profound significance for us.*' [Director, Parco Nord, 5.8]

Based on digital archive items, the research team co-produced a 100-page learning resource on the bombing war, in English and Italian editions, with Milan-based NGO, Lapsus, in response to lockdown. It was published in the IBCC Digital Archive in May 2020. M9 and Parco Nord/ Ecomuseum adopted it for outreach activities [5.7; 5.8]. By 31 December 2020, it had been downloaded 549 times [5.5].

- **Benefits for volunteer engagement and skills**

LIBS research has also been deployed in other visitor attractions, enabling similar improvements for digital collections. The Metheringham Aviation Visitor Centre is a volunteer-run aviation heritage attraction. It possesses an impressive paper archive which volunteers wanted to digitise but lacked the skills. In response, the LIBS research team devised a training programme adapted to their context. This enabled them to organise workflows using the research team's method (e.g. the IBCC controlled vocabulary). They reported that they would 'still be frightened of digitising' without the training [5.9]. As a result they have created an online Photo Gallery - <https://www.metheringhamairfield.co.uk/photo-gallery.html> [see 5.9] - which acknowledges the team's role, to raise their profile and use digital assets to respond to queries related to 106 Squadron, which was stationed at RAF Metheringham during the war.

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

- 5.1 Testimonial from the Losses Archivist, International Bomber Command Centre.
- 5.2 Testimonial and updated statistical information from the Chief Executive, International Bomber Command Centre.
- 5.3 Trip Advisor and Google Reviews evidence.
- 5.4 Association for Heritage Interpretation Awards citation 2019.
- 5.5 Analytics and user feedback for the International Bomber Command Centre Digital Archive.
- 5.6 Volunteer feedback regarding the International Bomber Command Centre Digital Archive IBCC.

- 5.7 Testimonial from the Curator, M9 Museum, Venice, Italy.
- 5.8 Evidence from Parco Nord and Ecomuseum, Milan, Italy.
- 5.9 Evidence from Metheringham Aviation Centre, Lincolnshire.