

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of East Anglia		
Unit of Assessment: 28 - History		
Title of case study: The Eighth in the East: The Military Heritage of East Anglia in the Second World War		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: Between 2010 and 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Robert Liddiard	Professor of Landscape History	2002 - to present
Derwin Gregory	Lecturer in History	2011 – 2014 & 2018 – 2020
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Between August 2013 and 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>The Second World War (WWII) stands on the cusp of human memory. As those who had direct experience of it pass away, new challenges arise in the appreciation of the relevance or significance of WWII's history and archaeology. Historians at UEA responded to this dilemma with an educational and cultural programme intended to promote the East of England's WWII social and military heritage. What might have been an exercise in nostalgia rapidly developed into a venture in social history, with diverse and far-reaching benefits. Supporting the education of adults and school children, stimulating local businesses, generating economic growth through the visitor economy, promoting wellbeing through occupational therapy, and improving museum resources not least through online media and its involvement in the development of a Tom Hanks mini-series, our project has not only enhanced cultural heritage but permanently altered attitudes to the region's past.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Liddiard is an internationally respected figure in the study of military landscapes and an acknowledged pioneer in the archaeology of twentieth-century conflict zones. Already renowned for his research on medieval castles and realising that more recent wars had bequeathed a built heritage just as significant but rather less well protected, he has increasingly turned his attention to the archaeology of WWII. Working from within UEA's Landscape Group, one of the leading research clusters on designed and built landscapes anywhere in the world, as Co-Investigator in a European Union InterReg IV venture on WWII Heritage (2010–14, total value EUR4,216,110) Liddiard collaborated with partners in the Netherlands, the UK, Belgium, and France, investigating and making more publicly accessible aspects of East Anglia's WWII heritage. From this sprang four guidebooks (20,000 copies distributed to public and heritage outlets), an award-winning 'Walberswick' Project' on the East coast anti-invasion defences of WWII (an REF2014 Impact Case Study), two ground-breaking articles published in 2012 (3.1, 3.2), and a monograph by Liddiard and David Sims, <i>A Very Dangerous Locality: the Landscape of the Suffolk Sandlings in the Second World War</i> (3.3). This book was winner of the History section of the 2019 East Anglian Book Awards and described in <i>Rural History</i> (2019) as 'a wonderful book ... brilliantly combining archival research with field survey'.</p>		
<p>East Anglia has particular significance in WWII heritage owing to the presence in the region from 1941–45 of the United States Eighth Air Force: one of the largest such formations ever assembled. While the history of this so-called 'Mighty Eighth' and its contribution to the Allied Strategic Bomber Offensive is well known (and widely celebrated in the USA, with its own museum in Savannah</p>		

Georgia), in eastern England it has left a substantial legacy, in local memory (now rapidly fading), in material and archaeological remains (still too often neglected), and culturally in a network of volunteer-run museums. These museums have endeavoured to preserve what can be rescued. However, they are generally dependent upon amateur enthusiasm, with the need for generational renewal of increasingly pressing concern.

In order to meet this challenge, Liddiard served as founding member of a project board and subsequently as academic lead to a Heritage Lottery funded community interest project: *The Eighth in the East*, 2013-16, which received a grant of GBP575,000, of which GBP74,874 (3.6) was channelled through UEA, with Rowena Burgess, a social historian also from the Landscape Group, as fellow member of the project board. Centred on the American 'friendly invasion', the project's aims were to promote education, to undertake a programme of archaeological survey and cataloguing, and to support the network of airfield site museums. *Eighth in the East* funded a 3-year post for a Learning Officer (Annie Sommazzi, and subsequently Andrew Farrell, both contracted via UEA, both now in permanent employment) to develop and deliver schools programmes. Liddiard provided academic expertise on archival material, oral history, and archaeological remains. Nine internships were funded (again administered through UEA), with recipients placed chiefly at airfield museums, tasked with cataloguing primary source materials, collecting and stewarding oral historical records, and with supporting community archaeology. Liddiard undertook training of volunteers and on-site recording. The archival and material remains thus gathered were widely publicized through a variety of media, including academic publications by Derwin Gregory (Liddiard's PhD student 2011-15, thereafter temporary Lecturer at UEA, now permanent Lecturer at Bishop Grosseteste University) (3.4), and a highly-regarded project website 8theast.org/, providing guidance to local heritage, an online legacy exhibition of photographs, story boards, podcasts, and blogs.

All of this work was undertaken and recorded at a time crucial to the oral history of WWII, before memories of the American presence in 1940s East Anglia entirely fade away. While the experiences of the American aircrew who flew from the region's airfields are well-documented and tend to frame our view of events, *Eighth in the East* chose instead to focus on the 'hidden histories' of the otherwise marginalised ground personnel, including African-American servicemen, and the many East Anglian men and women with whom they interacted. A region regarded before 1940 as relatively isolated, between 1941 and 1945 became home to many thousands of American servicemen and women, of diverse backgrounds. The effect here was to generate romance, tragedy, and tension in more or less equal measure. Of this the only remains still standing are those of airfields and civic/military defence systems. This evidence can be combined with the oral or written reports of those who were there, many of these reports now most easily accessed through the East Anglian Film Archive, stored in the Norfolk Record Office under joint UEA/Record Office management: an essential partner in the project's work. So successful did *Eighth in the East* prove in uncovering neglected aspects of the region's social and military heritage that it gave rise to a legacy project, headed by Gregory, loosely grouped under the title 'HQ-East', with its own social media outlets and programme of archaeological excavation, tasked in 2017-18 to investigate 'What the American's Left Behind in East Anglia' (supported by grants totalling GBP34,000, equally split between the UEA ESRC Impact Accelerator Account and the UEA Higher Education Innovation Fund allocation). Acknowledging the potential benefits of archaeology as occupational therapy, two excavations were conducted on the site of the former airfield at Thorpe Abbots. Previously unknown WWII archaeological remains were discovered, written up, and published by Gregory (3.5).

3. References to the research

Academic Publications

- 3.1** A Piece of Coastal Crust; the Origins of a Second World War Defence Landscape at Walberswick, Suffolk
R.Liddiard and **D.Sims**
History, 97:327. 402-30. (2012). DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-229X.2012.00555.x

- 3.2** A Hedgehog on the Heath; the Second World War Landscape of Exercise 'Kruschen', Dunwich, Suffolk
R.Liddiard and D.Sims
Archaeological Journal, 169:1 519-49. (2012). DOI: 10.1080/00665983.2012.11020923
- 3.3** *A Very Dangerous Locality: the Landscape of the Suffolk Sandlings in the Second World War*
R. Liddiard and D. Sims
University of Hertfordshire Press (2019). ISBN 978-1912260089
- 3.4** "I do feel good because my stomach is full of good hotcakes": Comfort Food, Home and the USAAF in East Anglia during the Second World War'
D. Gregory and C. Wayne
History, 105:368, 806-24. (2020). DOI: 10.1111/1468-229X.13081
- 3.5** Vernacular Memorialisation in the Military: personal acts of remembrance at RAF Thorpe Abbots, England
D. Gregory
Journal of Conflict Archaeology, 14:2-3, 83-98. (2019) DOI: 10.1080/15740773.2020.1726124

Grants

- 3.6 R. Liddiard.** Project: 'The Eighth in the East'. Project dates: 2013–2016.
 Funder: Heritage Lottery Fund. Grant value: GBP575,000 (UEA GBP74,874).

4. Details of the Impact

Through a variety of projects and subsequent spin-offs, we have sought to contextualize and raise awareness of the East of England's military heritage. In so doing, we have benefitted local society and the economy more broadly, recording, enhancing, and disseminating historical records, reaching out to the tourist industry and to other local businesses, and informing those now engaged in dramatizing historical reality.

Volunteers, Citizen Archaeology, Education, and Occupational Therapy

Eighth in the East directly engaged 15,969 people, with key beneficiaries involved in the educational programme, including theatrical performances, family days, and exhibitions (5737 visitors). Through Liddiard and UEA, a bespoke package of historical resources was developed and disseminated, alongside a programme of outreach, including museum displays, archaeological excavation, and memorial restoration. 375 schoolchildren took part (far in excess of the project target of 150), either through classroom/museum activities, or outreach projects (5.1, pp.69, 86).

For both educators and educated this was often a watershed moment in attitudes to history and heritage. The level of engagement amongst schoolchildren drew comment. As one museum curator put it: '*The standard of work ... was as good as any professional touring exhibition that we've hosted*' (5.1, p.86). At participating museums, 60% reported an increase in the awareness of their existence, and 40% increased school visits and raised footfall from younger age groups (5.1, p.42). At Bottisham Museum it was the innovation that struck a chord: '*No one had thought about an education programme, doing formal lesson plans ... People had studied the 8USAAF but not really with a view to teaching it to kids*' (5.1, p.90). Educational material was also placed online and made accessible via the project website and the *Times Educational Supplement* sites (at least 5,389 views and downloads, 5.2 and 5.1, p.88). Of the project's nine interns, all rated the training they received as effective, reported improved self-confidence, and that it had helped their future careers. On a practical level, one commented that the experience '*allowed me to put into*

practice the skills I've learnt at university, another that *'the whole experience was valuable'* (5.1, p.100). All nine moved on to employment or full-time postgraduate study.

In terms of training, *Eighth in the East* directly engaged 120 volunteers to conduct archaeological surveys on 95 aviation sites (5.1, p.52), with 72% reporting that they had acquired new skills, 50% that they had subsequently used these skills elsewhere, and 97% rating their training 'effective' or better (5.1, p.58). Supplying local archaeology groups with the expertise with which to secure their futures, Liddiard's training was cited here as especially decisive. In the successor legacy project HQ-East, occupational therapy was a central concern. In two excavations at Thorpe Abbots, in collaboration with the American Veterans Archaeological Recovery Programme, training was provided to 19 British and American serving and former members of the armed forces, as well as to family members. Military personnel undertook 462 volunteering hours, 98 of these hours with observation by Occupational Therapists (5.4). The benefits for those who took part were significant, one medically discharged veteran stating that she had not *'smiled as much as she did on the excavation for a long time since her injury'*. Another participant reported that *'these injured soldiers have spent a lot of time feeling ignored and forgotten ... and to have you (Gregory) acknowledge her thoughts ... really helped with her confidence'* (5.3a). The Occupational Therapist observers confirmed the transformative effects on well-being, noting that those taking part found themselves not only using skills learned in the military for new purposes, but developing new capabilities, thanks in part to the *'accepting and non-judgemental environment'* (5.4, 5.5).

Networking, Dissemination, and Service to Museums

The museums also benefitted, not least through the recruitment of new and younger volunteers. Thorpe Abbots airfield museum, for example, reports an increased artefact collection, increased awareness, and significantly increased footfall (5.3a). Through the dissemination of its work, the project and its legacy organisations have become the centre of an expanding network of interest groups, acting as a connector and facilitator in ways not originally envisaged. Global reach is evidenced through social media. By July 2020 (5.6), posts on the legacy project HQ-East's Twitter feed (followed by 4,677 individuals located in 89 different countries) had reached 6,048,685 people worldwide. A further 1,290,359 were reached via Facebook (1,126 followers); whilst 17,322 individuals follow the Instagram account. A survey of online viewers demonstrates the tangible benefits of this network, with 32% of respondents indicating that they have visited a regional museum as a result of their website use, and a further 44% reporting that the project had changed the way they think not only about the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) in East Anglia but about twentieth-century heritage sites more generally (5.6). This has brought further benefits to a range of national and regional organisations, not just in heritage but for the local economy. The internationally important American Air Museum (a subsidiary of Imperial War Museum, Duxford, 2019 footfall 401,287, 5.6) uses the project's site as a principal platform from which to share its collections with the public (5.3c). As reported by the American Air Museum's Web Engagement Officer, without its own social media accounts, the Museum depends upon Liddiard and Gregory's site as *'the way its (29,000+) photos are shared regularly with target audiences around the world'*. In turn, this has led *'to corrections and improvements to the Imperial War Museum's catalogue records'* (5.3c).

Local Business, the Visitor Economy, and Advice to Media

As a hub for a range of interest groups, our various projects have promoted historic tourism and facilitated the creation of business networks. In 2018, we hosted a corporate and educational event at Norwich Airport attended by representatives of 30 local businesses and enlivened by cockpit tours of one of the few still airworthy Spitfires (MH434, built in 1943). Described by Barclays Bank as *'an exceptional event'* impossible without the project's support, this brought Barclays *'new business opportunities in the aviation and technology sectors'* (5.7a), not least with SaxonAir Charter, whose letter (5.7b) notes the event's *'superb'* organisation, and the unprecedented opportunities arising here for networking and new contacts. As a result of such enterprise, the not-for-profit business-led private company Visit East of England developed a 'Friendly Invasion' tourist package. This resulted in the award of GBP237,000 from the Discover

England Fund, towards a GBP387,000 'Friendly Invasion' campaign. By 2019, this campaign was able to estimate a likely future uplift of 40% in US visitors, and the development of high and medium cost tour packages 'of a kind that had never sold before' (5.8). On average, each American tourist spends GBP930 per visit to the UK, excluding flights (5.9), suggesting a significant boost to the visitor economy. It also brought our project into direct conjunction with what in due course will become an Apple TV Plus miniseries, 'Masters of the Air', intended as a third part to the Tom Hanks/Stephen Spielberg WWII series, 'Band of Brothers' and 'The Pacific'. Gregory was closely involved in discussions here, including presentations of his research to executives from Playtone (Tom Hanks' production company), to the scriptwriter, and to the author of the underpinning narrative (Don Miller). Five thousand copies of a publication produced by Visit East of England, drawing upon our project's research, with a foreword by the Duke of Cambridge and Tom Hanks, were freely distributed to museums in the US, including the National WWII Museum in New Orleans and the National Mighty Eighth Museum in Savannah Georgia (5.8), and Tom Hanks is reported to have 'turned his office into what looks like an Eighth Air Force museum, complete with model airplanes hanging from the ceiling' (5.10). Planned outcomes have been seriously affected by COVID-19 with filming, originally scheduled to begin in 2020, twice postponed. In due course, nonetheless, the heritage central to Liddiard and Gregory's work is to be broadcast internationally to an audience far larger than anything imaginable when our project was first conceived.

With or without Hollywood glitz, our project has benefitted a range of audiences in diverse ways. In the words of the independent evaluation report for *Eighth in the East*, it has 'made an extremely positive difference to this history and the people of the East of England (and beyond) through training and education, participation and engagement' (5.1, p.3). Inspiring, training, and informing a future generation of enthusiasts, it has helped preserve the memory of an extraordinary socio-historical phenomenon not just in terms of written or recorded testimony but as a built environment. In due course, such landscapes may seem to future generations as significant and as iconic as the medieval castle or the once similarly neglected monuments of the Industrial Age.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 *Eighth in the East Project, Final Evaluation Report* (University of Hertfordshire, 2016)
- 5.2 The *Eighth in the East* Website 8theast.org/
- 5.3 Supporting Letters (a) Thorpe Abbots Airfield Museum (b) 100th Bomb Group Memorial Museum (c) The Imperial War Museum
- 5.4 Report by UEA's School of Health Science. (*Evaluation of volunteers' involvement in an archaeological excavation; March 19th – 24th 2018*)
- 5.5 'Archaeology as a meaningful occupation for military personnel', *Occupational Therapy News* (2018), 24-6
- 5.6 Social media statistic and responses to online survey and website data, visitor statistics
- 5.7 Supporting letters (a) Barclays Bank, (b) Saxon Air Charter, (c) The Aviation Skills Partnership
- 5.8 Supporting letter and Friendly Invasion brochure, Visit East of England
- 5.9 Visit Britain visitor figures
- 5.10 Footsteps Research webpage