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Breaking the Myths:

FIRST WORLD WAR AND AFRICA

Summary Evaluative Report
FEBRUARY 2019





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Report and research completed by



AJD Solutions offers freelance consultancy to organisations in the South East, specialising in the delivery of innovative community engagement projects, mentoring, coaching and focus group activity, as well as project research and evaluation.

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ABSTRACT

Diversity House is a charity which aims to promote social inclusion and engagement of under-represented and marginalised communities in Kent. It was founded 12 years ago by its present owner and Chief Executive Officer, Christine Locke. It has its main base at Phoenix House in Sittingbourne, as well as a satellite base in Maidstone.

In late 2016, Diversity House won a National Lottery Grant for Heritage from the Heritage Fund, as part of the Fund's desire to support communities to better understand the impact of the First World War on our society today, 100 years after the end of the war, as well as the impact it had at the time.

Diversity House had a specific goal in mind, which centred around the raising of awareness of the global nature of the conflict, and a redrawing of the commonly held view in British society that this was a parochial war, fought in France, and fought mainly by British, French and Americans.

The project's primary goal was to allow participants to discover heritage and become informed.

This evaluative report will provide a summary of the outputs and outcomes of Diversity House's project, called 'Breaking the Myths': First World War and Africa, which took place over a two-year period starting in January 2017.

'Breaking the Myths' sought to highlight the important fact that the First World War was a conflict that spread far and wide, affecting every race, creed, colour or religion. The project's primary goal was to allow participants to discover heritage and become informed. It set out to enable people to hear different voices, (and different versions), of the First World War, to ensure that recognition for bravery and endeavour was gained for all those who were involved.

It sought, in particular, to raise the awareness of younger members of two communities in Kent - in Swale and Maidstone - of the sacrifices made by African peoples and nations in the First World War, and set out to do this through an ambitious project that included a multitude of learning events, community activities, memorial events and conferences.

It sought to take the project out to many different locations and social groupings, through, among other things, touring exhibitions, field trips, and presentations to Members of Parliament in both Houses. It held well-attended and participative launch and celebration events, at the start and finish of the project, with (particularly with regard to the latter) a diverse and large group of stakeholders, participants and performers all in attendance.

This report will highlight the energy and interest with which younger members of society approached this project; it will demonstrate the passion and ambition of scope with which Christine Locke and her team undertook the work; and will show how communities from across mid-Kent were able to arrive at a much greater understanding of the sacrifice and duty given to this country by people from across the world and, in particular, by Africans.

It will also demonstrate how the project helped local communities to more meaningfully place Africa, and Africans, within the context of a contemporary, diverse United Kingdom, at a time when our understanding of our past, and the role the past plays in shaping modern Britain, is all too often built on shifting sand and misconceptions.



SUMMARY TIMELINE OF ACTIVITY

The timeline of project activity is illustrated across the next two pages. This gives clear indication of the large and varied scope of the project, which was both far-reaching and ambitious, in terms of the number of activities delivered; the number of recipients (participants) reached by the project; and the number of stakeholders involved.

The most striking feature of the activity timeline is the diverse age grouping of people to whom this project was intended to deliver. Schoolchildren and youth groups were at the forefront of the majority of project activity, but by creating a touring exhibition to 7 Swale libraries, and by holding an act of remembrance at Sittingbourne town centre, all age groupings were able to be included in the project.



This report will evaluate the range of activity that took place, and will deliberate upon outputs, outcomes, and participant feedback, to draw a representative summary of the Breaking the Myths project. It will consist of information gathered through four key pieces of data:

1. Interviews with Christine Locke, the Project Lead;
2. Analysis of the work produced by the participants, and in particular by the schoolchildren who took part;
3. Assessment of feedback from a range of stakeholders;
4. Review of the evaluation of the project carried out by the Diversity House team themselves.

Table 1: A summary timeline of planned project activity

WHEN	WHAT AND WHY	STAKEHOLDERS	RECIPIENTS
Dec 2016	Project Steering Group – to prepare, plan and inform the project	Christine Locke CEO Diversity House Local historian	Project participants 25 new project volunteers and partners 20 sessional workers
March 2017	Project Launch	Christine Locke Swale and Maidstone Gateways Schoolchildren, young people and parents	All partners, participants and stakeholders
April – May 2017	Volunteer and participant recruitment	Christine Locke and Diversity House staff	Teachers, community groups, volunteering organisations
June 2017	Field trip to Delville Woods Cemetery and Museum, France. To provide educational and creative workshops	Christine Locke and Diversity House staff; Local historian Teaching staff from St Michael's Junior School and St Francis Primary School	240 school children and teaching staff
June 2017	Field trip to Imperial War Museum. To ignite ideas for further learning	Christine Locke and Diversity House staff	125 local adults and young people
Oct 2017	Creative workshops with local Primary schools to identify, interpret and record heritage	Christine Locke and Diversity House staff Local artists and creatives Goldsmiths University University of Lagos sessional workers	2,000 schoolchildren, and teaching staff
Dec 2017	Field trip to British Museum, Black Cultural Archive and local war memorials, to learn how to better interpret and explain heritage	Christine Locke and Diversity House staff	Four groups of up to 12 youth club participants in each
Jan -Sep 2018	Ongoing project activities with participating schools to inform groups about African culture – oral histories	Diversity House staff, volunteers and sessional workers Dr Sam Carroll WW1 Historian Professor Connelly School of History, University of Kent	600 Primary school children
Oct-Nov 2018	Final exhibition tour of 7 Swale Libraries to promote key these and inform local residents	Kent County Council Libraries Christine Locke and Diversity House staff	5,000 residents of Swale
Oct 2018	Local Primary school participants to present project to members of both Houses of Parliament	Christine Locke and Diversity House staff Steering group members Children and young people who participated	Project participants across the SE region
Nov 2018	Activities centred around the centenary of Armistice Day including unveiling of memorial plaque in the town centre	Christine Locke and Diversity House staff Project volunteers Town Council	The whole community of Sittingbourne (and Swale)

INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTINE LOCKE

Two meetings were held with Christine Locke, one in December 2018, and one in January 2019. The initial meeting explored the scope of the project – the outputs and outcomes, and levels of engagement in the project by the local community. This helped to form a clear view of the scope of the project.

The second meeting, however, was a good opportunity to ask more in-depth questions, which related to why Diversity House wanted to deliver this project – what was the reasoning behind the idea? Where did the passion to want to delve deeper spring from? Also – who took part, and why? And what were the project learnings for this two-year undertaking?

The following represents a summarised version of the interview held between Andrew Dennis (AD) from AJD Solutions, and Christine Locke (CL) from Diversity House, on 31 January 2019, and gives a compelling rationale for why Christine felt that this project needed to be delivered.

AD: What gave you the initial idea for the project?

CL: I had been having thoughts around this from as early as the start of 2015. I attended several funding workshops based around the centenary of the First World War, and there were many organisations there – lots of conversations and ideas that were being floated. It set me thinking.

AD: What did you take away from these events? Where were initial thoughts heading?

CL: Well I was the only black person in the room usually! Conversations were about the conflict in France – they centred on British involvement, mainly. I sensed that there were no voices at the workshops that were articulating what my feelings were – that the centenary events circulating around the First World War were narrow, that the diverse group of people who fought in the war – Africans, Poles, Canadians – they were being missed out.

AD: What other events did you attend to form your views?

CL: I visited a conference at the Imperial War Museum. I looked at the displays. Again, I felt a sense of disconnect – I knew black Africans had fought in the war, I had learned this while I was growing up, why weren't their voices being heard, their stories being told?

AD: What steps did you decide to take next?

CL: I felt invigorated by the various workshops and events I attended. I knew I had to do something to make a difference. I devised a questionnaire and used my contacts to send this to over 50 organisations in Swale and Maidstone – Age UK, Pinnacle Project, the organisations that work within Phoenix House where we are located – and the responses confirmed my suspicions – people had very little conception of the First World War as a global conflict.

We also sent out a short survey to over 2,000 people to consult about their knowledge and awareness of the First World War and received over 1,030 responses across Swale and Maidstone. The responses gained from these added more fuel to the fire – I was convinced that it was an important piece of work to deliver, a heritage-based project to engage communities to more fully come to terms with the global nature of the war. They knew about the trenches of northern France, but had little or no awareness of the great sacrifices made by other nations and nationalities. I knew I wanted my project to achieve something different to everyone else's.

AD: What – specifically – did you set out to achieve? What were the project outcomes?

CL: I wanted to enable people to explore, learn and gain a balanced understanding of the global nature of the First World War. I wanted to share reminiscences of the contributions made by all – but especially by Africa, and by Africans. I wanted people to reflect on the effect these contributions had on society both then and now.

AD: What approaches were you initially set upon using – and how did these develop over time?

CL: I wanted to use intergenerational and intercultural approaches to document dialogues and memories about the war. I wanted the project to engage people in participatory research, in order to demystify the roles of Africans, and Africa soldiers, in the First World War. This became my central theme – and I stuck with it. This theme remained strong, and the title 'Breaking the Myths' seemed to encapsulate my feelings about the subject matter.

AD: You talk about engaging people – getting them to participate fully in the project, to undertake their own research, what was your thinking behind this?

CL: I wanted people to question! I wanted them to learn. To learn about heritage and about different voices. My objectives were to have enabled participants to develop heritage research and investigational skills, to have increased cross-cultural learning, and to have improved cross-cultural understanding and acceptance. I wanted them to build cultural bridges and improve community cohesion.

AD: You talk about the participants – but what about the people most affected by the subject matter – the ones who perhaps had the largest stake in the project – the African community of Kent today?

CL: Oh, they were very much at the forefront of my thinking. I wanted to develop a better sense of belonging, a sense of identity, for Africans living in the community. I wanted them, (as well as indigenous groups), to be able to identify and better understand the reasons why Africa, and Africans, were drawn into the war; as well as to gain a deeper knowledge of their contributions, the immediate aftermath, and the longer lasting legacy of the war against the backdrop of current conflict and tension. The Remembrance Book that we produced was very important – it answered the question of remembrance, and how Africa and Africans should be remembered, and has become a tangible legacy which has been donated to libraries and catalogued to be preserved for future generations of readers.

AD: Which key stakeholders did you identify as being crucial to participating in this project?

CL: I had a keenly developed sense, from an early stage, that I wanted to open the minds of younger people – to make sure that they were gaining a wider perspective of the conflict than that which was being taught at school through the National Curriculum. So, I identified several schools in the Swale and Maidstone boroughs, as well as members of the Diversity House Youth Club. I wanted to very much include community members from both mainstream and African Diasporas across Swale and Maidstone.

AD: An ambitious, exciting project then. What barriers did you come across? What would you do differently next time?

CL: Barriers were, at first, gaining access to the potential participant groupings, especially the schools, which are busy places with a number of conflicting demands placed upon them. I dealt with this by seeking to offer something that would run alongside their existing curriculum demands, to offer a solution to the schools, rather than a problem! And the personal touch is key – I visited the schools many times to meet with staff and pupils before embarking on specific pieces of work.

What would I do differently?! It has been a huge project – extremely time-consuming and with many different moving parts. I think a tighter project and budget plan at the outset would have helped me to stick to deadlines better. It is something I will take into my next project.

End of interview.

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

OUTCOMES

The 'Breaking the Myths' project outcomes coalesced around 3 identifiable areas – **heritage, people, and communities** - to meet the requirements of the funding body. In addition to these outcomes, Diversity House planned for all participants to have developed **skills and knowledge outcomes**. These 4 outcome areas are listed below.

Heritage based outcomes

- Better interpretation and explanation of heritage
- Identification and recording of heritage

Outcomes for people

- Learn about heritage and people
- Develop new skills
- Have a rich and enjoyable experience
- Change their attitudes and/or behaviour
- Volunteer time

Outcomes for communities

- More (and a wider range of) people will have engaged with heritage
- Local areas/communities will be a better place to live, work or visit
- More social cohesion and integration
- Greater awareness of future and current global debates and issues

Skills and Knowledge outcomes

- Increased cross-cultural learning
- Improved cross-cultural understanding and acceptance
- Ability to bridge cultural gaps
- A greater sense of belonging (especially for African Diasporas)
- A greater sense of identity (especially for African Diasporas)
- Improved community cohesion

OUTPUTS

The project carried out **close to 400** different activities in the project lifespan, and reached **over 17,000** people of all ages and backgrounds.

Crafts, arts, drama, music (lamentation, ululation), dancing, battlefield trips, museum/gallery visits, and conferences/seminars in educational institutions and communities all took place.

Members of the community were trained as volunteers, and, along with the participants (the school children and young people) gained skills in research and presentation; report and letter writing; organising events; planning, designing and developing marketing materials; and social media use.

A summary of selected outcomes and outputs of the 'Breaking the Myths' project is given in the tables below:

Table 2: A selection of Breaking the Myths output

OUTPUT	
1	Over 850 different people attended and participated in the sum of different activities of the project
2	Over 500 materials (videos, photographs, artworks and paintings) were catalogued and made more accessible to communities
3	380 different heritage workshops and activities were delivered
4	A dedicated WWI heritage website page was created, with information about the project's activities and event
5	320 worksheets, teaching aids and other learning resources were created for use within the National Curriculum for Key Stages 1-4
6	A short drama on the life of Walter Tull was scripted in collaboration with the pupils of St Michael's Primary School, Maidstone
7	290 people volunteered on the project
8	Digitalised and paper copies of schemes of work and teaching aids were produced to ensure accessibility and continuity of exploration, learning and heritage for future generation
9	Four story boards with identified and vital information on the 4 key themes of the project were produced
10	A memorial plaque commemorating people of all races who gave their lives in the First World War was commissioned and unveiled at the Sittingbourne War Memorial in Nov 2018 to mark the centenary of Armistice Day

Table 3: A selection of Breaking the Myths outcomes

OUTCOME	
1	Participants reported improved self-awareness, confidence and positive identity, by pupils in the participating schools and communities
2	Participants reported greater levels of mutual understanding and sense of social cohesion
3	Participants spoke about gaining positive attitudes and appreciation of non-indigenous history
4	Participants reported becoming better aware of Africa's history, especially with regard to its relationship with colonial history.
5	Participants reported becoming better aware of Africa's history, especially in relation to its war effort
6	Participants became better aware of how different cultures remember and record past events
7	Participants gained new competencies in ICT (blogging, tweeting, and Instagram use), and the design of promotional materials
8	Participants gained research and curating skills, including analysing historic documents interpreting archival materials
9	Participants gained administrative skills including event planning, record planning and minute taking
10	Participants gained greater communication skills, including interviewing skills, presenting to groups, acting and drama, and letter writing.

CASE STUDY 1

WALTER TULL - A SYMBOL FOR REMEMBRANCE

In 2017, Diversity House partnered with St Michael's C.E. Junior School in Maidstone, to deliver a number of activities that had the following main objectives:



1. To support the pupils to learn more about diverse cultures and religions, and to adapt their attitudes and behaviours in relations to other people's heritage – with particular reference to Africa/Africans.
2. To promote the understanding and appreciation that Africans, in the past and in present times, have a stake in Britain.
3. To build an awareness and knowledge of the far-reaching effect that African soldiers and porters have had on the prosperity and stability of Britain by fighting in the First World War.
4. To underscore the premise that ethnic minorities have always contributed to this country, economically, socially and culturally, and that this continues to be the case in the present day.

A global approach was taken to teach participants about the First World War, to provide the pupils with an enriching experience that would support the school's National Curriculum teaching, to engender free and open discussions about non-white soldiers' contribution to the First World War; to connect this period of history with the Britain we live in today; and to improve pupils' experiences of multi-cultural Britain.

The main body of work centred on the life and experiences of an Afro-Caribbean and black British soldier in the war called Walter Tull. He was also a prominent British footballer of his time, playing for Tottenham Hotspur and becoming Britain's first ever outfield black player.

As a soldier, Tull's leadership qualities were quickly recognised and he was promoted to sergeant. Despite military regulations forbidding 'any negro or person of colour' being commissioned as an Officer, Walter Tull was promoted to Lieutenant in 1917. He met his death while leading an attack on the Western Front in March 1918. He was 29 years old. He was subsequently recommended for the Military Cross.

The pupils at St Michael's C.E. Junior School began, in collaboration with Diversity House, a large-scale project to celebrate the life, the accomplishments and the legacy of Walter Tull. A trip to the battlefields was undertaken; a play was adapted and interpreted about Tull and performed by Year 5 students; and a letter writing campaign was started by pupils to petition for the award of a Military Cross to Lieutenant Tull.

The letters written by the pupils, which were sent to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in May 2018, were received by the Rt Hon The Earl Howe PC, Minister of State in the House of Lords, who replied as the Defence Minister responsible for medallic recognition. His reply was shared with the school by Maidstone's MP, Helen Grant, who has been a robust supporter of the 'Breaking the Myths' project.

The Rt Hon Earl Howe's letter states:

"I was particularly impressed to see such passionate interest in seeing a man, with such an important story, be recognised and rewarded. The trip Diversity House organised (to France) appears to have been an excellent opportunity for them to learn a great deal about the essential contribution of peoples of many nationalities to victory in the World Wars."

This final phrase touches directly upon one of the main objectives of the 'Breaking the Myths' project, that of developing a greater awareness of the wider involvement of nations and peoples in the First World War than most people possess, which, in turn, promotes a greater sense of the involvement and impact that other cultures and religions have had on Britain since the war.

The school pupils took to their task of gaining full recognition for Lieutenant Tull with vigour and determination. Many children seem to have thought long and hard about the experiences of black people in Britain at the beginning of the last century.

One Year 5 student wrote (to his MP) that Tull has earned full recognition for his endeavours because:

"...he is black, that means back in the day he would be hated and it takes great courage to overcome being harassed. Walter has done exceptionally good things and he has worked very hard about achieving those achievements. And he would have to (have) worked even harder to overcome his harassment."

Another Y5 pupil wrote:

"Over the past two weeks we have been thinking very hard about Walter's life and the fact that he's black means he doesn't get as much recognition as other people."

Many wrote about him being an inspiration to other black people, and about the huge debt the country owes to him for his bravery during the war, and his fortitude in the face of racism during his football career.

Taken as whole, the letters represent a fascinating insight into the younger generation's concept of British values – the values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance for those of different faiths and beliefs.

The points raised in the letters are reference points for future debates the children might enter into, concerning global debates and issues such as racism, equality and integration.

They shine a light on a very individual story of fortitude, bravery and resilience. They portray a deep understanding and empathy with the facts of Walter Tull's early life – of being a member of a large family of 8 in the predominantly white area of Folkestone; of the migration of his father 12 years prior to Walter's birth; of the early deaths of both of Walter's parents; and of how Walter overcame these challenges, to face up to the prejudices of the time, to exceed in his sporting career and his army life.

They have shown how the children have thought deeply about issues such as social cohesion, attitudes and behaviours, and the awareness of how people need to respond to one another in order to create local areas and communities that will be better places to live, work or visit.

On a broader perspective, The Walter Tull scheme of work helped build an awareness of how Tull – of Caribbean descent – can be used as a symbol for remembrance of all Africans who were not recognised during the First World War. Moreover, he can be identified as a representation of any community, social or ethnic grouping that has at times been overlooked by prevailing voices of power and influence.

FIELD TRIPS AND SITE VISITS

One of the main project goals from the outset was to run young people's workshops which culminated in on-site learning, such as field trips to commemorative sites on the Western Front, where historical experts would hold workshops and talks on the site itself, which added a deeper, more meaningful context for learning.

One such site visit was to Delville Wood Cemetery. Located near Longueval, France, Delville Wood Cemetery is the third largest cemetery in the Somme battlefield area. It is the final resting place of over 5,500 servicemen of the First World War, of whom more than 3,500 remain unidentified. Most of those buried died in July, August and September 1916.

"The goals and aims were clearly set out from the start and met a number of curriculum areas for the school including history, Arts and Crafts, Geography, English, numeracy, Fundamental British Values, and Local Study."

The main intention throughout this site visit, attended by pupils and teaching staff from two Primary schools in Maidstone and Swale, was to embed key learning points within each school's curriculum requirements. A First World War expert - Dr Anne Samson, Co-ordinator of the Great War in Africa Association - was engaged to work on the project prior to the site visit taking place.

Dr Samson worked over a period of 2 years to hold workshops in the participating schools, to increase the children's knowledge of the Western Front. She accompanied one of the schools on the tour of battlefield sites in France, including the visit to Delville Wood Cemetery, to add key bits of information about battles at the Western Front, and to look at these within wider perspectives - principally, to the African campaigns, as well as assisting the Anglia Tours guides to explain the involvement of South Africans at the Delville Wood scene of conflict.

During the trip, the pupils also visited the headquarters of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, and heard a talk given by staff at the Commission, before seeing the soldier's graves.

Feedback from children and teachers who took part in the project as a whole is added in a separate section of this report, but a Year 5 teacher from one of the Primary Schools who participated in this site visit commented that:

"The goals and aims were clearly set out from the start and met a number of curriculum areas for the school including history, Arts and Crafts, Geography, English, numeracy, Fundamental British Values, and Local Study."

Using Diversity House Youth Club and other venues frequented by young people, workshops, local site visits, talks with historians and creative activities were delivered, ensuring that no young person was left behind in the project. In total, 213 young people visited sites such as the Commonwealth War Graves Commission trip, a visit to Ypres in Belgium, to the Black Cultural Archives, and to local cemeteries in Swale and Maidstone with marked WWI graves.

A little under 2,000 young people participated in activities such as writing poems, songs and letters, and campaigning and lobbying their local MPs (for the Walter Tull campaign); 42 different activities were delivered to children and young people across the project lifespan; and over 11,000 hours of face-to-face delivery time were delivered.

By necessity, those children and young people who went on site visits and field trips were limited in number compared to the whole number of beneficiaries. Nonetheless, these figures demonstrate the lengths Diversity House went to, to ensure that key learning interventions were held with an impressively large number of young people in Maidstone and Swale.



CREATIVE WORKSHOPS WITH SCHOOLS

Interactive workshops and activities were the mainstay for participants' learning and engagement. 42 interactive workshops/activities took place with 1,994 young people of all ages and backgrounds at different in 4 schools in Maidstone and Swale.

Workshops and activities on the four core themes of the project were delivered to participants to enable them to:

- (1) identify and record;
- (2) develop new skill;
- (3) engage with heritage and
- (4) have changed attitudes/behaviour.

Issues of equality, diversity, inclusion and social justice were vital topics delivered in the project.

The workshops offered a wide-ranging and inclusive curriculum, and students' feedback in the relevant section of this report demonstrates the effectiveness of the workshops, and the enjoyment had by the participants. The feedback indicates a strong sense of changes of behaviours and attitudes; improved awareness and understanding of why the First World War happened, of those who took part in it, and of the consequences of the war; and the involvement and contributions of Africa and Africans in the war.

Young people gained confidence and skills in campaigning and lobbying, evidenced by their letters to their MP, Mrs Helen Grant (referenced previously in the report) and her response on 9th May 2018; by the letter written to the young people of St. Michael's Junior School on 18th June 2018 by the Minister of State in the House of Lords, the Rt Hon The Earl Howe PC (also referenced previously); as well as a thank you letter for campaigning for Lt. Walter Tull which was received from his family. The following table gives a summary of the nature of some of the activities that took place in the participating schools.

(Table 4: A sample of the 42 workshops and other learning events delivered by Diversity House staff and project volunteers to students at schools across Maidstone and Swale, Jan 2017 - July 2018)

DATE	TYPE OF DELIVERY	SUMMARY OF WORK COMPLETED
11 Jan 2017	School Workshops	Creative Workshop
16 Jan 2017	School Workshops	School Assembly (WW1)
06 Mar 2017	School Workshops	Remembrance (WW1)
20 Mar 2017	School Workshops	Intro: Berlin Conference – Scramble for Africa
03 May 2017	School Workshops	Global Nature of WW1
19 Jun 2017	School Workshops	Illness and Medicine (WW1)
26 Jun 2017	School Workshops	Illness and Disease (WW1)
17 Jul 2017	School Workshops	Archival Research (WW1)
18 Sep 2017	School Workshops	Revisiting WW1 In Africa
15 Jan 2018	School Workshops	South Africa and WW1
29 Jan 2018	School Workshops	Recruitment and Experience of South Africa WW1
19 Feb 2018	School Workshops	Battle of Delville Wood
24 Mar 2018	School Workshops	Walter Tull's Army Years
26 Mar 2018	School Workshops	Campaign letter to Helen Grant MP
30 Apr 2018	School Workshops, Collaborations	Commonwealth Day 2018
04 Jun 2018	School Workshops	Walter Tull – Script Writing
11 Jun 2018	School Workshops	Walter Tull – Audition and Rehearsals
18 Jun 2018	School Workshops, Project exhibitions	Walter Tull – Play Performance
23 Jul 2018	School Workshops, Project exhibitions	Suffrage exhibition – planning and curating
23 Jul 2018	School Workshops, Project exhibitions, events, collaborations	Tull 100 Award *

**In recognition of Tull's unprecedented achievement in becoming an officer, despite the explicit barrier to his promotion at the time, the Tull100 project is a 'Big Ideas' project which has raised and backed the idea of awarding medals to those who make their communities more inclusive (1).*



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In addition to the workshops and learning activities that took place in schools and at youth centres, the 'Breaking the Myths' project fully engaged with the wider community on several levels. This section of the report will look at two ways in which local communities were engaged:

1. Through involving and engaging with volunteers, and
2. Through the delivery of activities to members of the public

Volunteers

Volunteers from many different backgrounds were used by Diversity House to steer and co-design the project in its initial stages, to co-implement during the delivery phases, and to feed into the internal and ongoing evaluation of the project as it ran its course.

Volunteers were sourced in two main ways – through use of existing contacts within the project stakeholder base i.e. volunteers from schools or local faith groups; and through a signposting route via Swale CVS, the main volunteering organisation in Swale Borough.

A core group of around 290 volunteers dedicated time and knowledge to a number of the project's initiatives and activities, while a 'non-core' group of over 4,000 volunteered their time to engaging with at least one initiative or activity.

Analysis of a sample of the volunteer data set reveals that 95% of volunteers were drawn from the Kent postcodes and the remaining 5% from other areas, including from outside of the UK.

This represents a significant input into the project from people outside of the paid staffing resource of Diversity House, and includes teachers, historians, members of societies and community groups, and youth workers.

Workshops

A key focal point of the project was to engage with black and minority ethnic groupings, along with indigenous groups, to encourage participation in learning workshops, and attendance at accessible community venues where these workshops were held. The former grouping of people was identified at an early stage, due to the wealth of data that shows that black and minority ethnic groups are less likely to participate in cultural heritage activities in the UK than indigenous groups – visits to galleries, museums etc.

68 different sessions of community workshops were delivered in all, taking place in venues such as country parks, libraries and local cemeteries. Time was taken to identify venues that were well-known locally, and which were accessible by public transport.

The project was successfully able to use attendance at existing events on the local circuit - Volunteer Week, Art in the Park, Armed Forces Day, 100 years of the Royal Air Force (RAF100); and International Women's Day, for example - to host workshops and engage with local people.

Feedback from people who participated in the workshops was extremely positive. A selection of soundbites is given below:

- "A fantastic project."
- "Brilliant work."
- "What an inspiring presentation!"
- "Vital work."
- "Very interesting."

Examples of the contents of the workshops include workshops to create webpages; examination of historic archival material; library resource skills; presentations by local historians; learning about how to explain and interpret heritage; and learning about how to identify, record, and disseminate heritage so a wider sample of the population could access

CASE STUDY 2

AVENUE OF REMEMBRANCE AND HERITAGE TRAIL

There are only Avenues of Remembrance in the UK. One, in Cobham, which has a total of 44 cherry trees flanking the two main routes into and out of the village, is in the borough of Elmbridge, in Surrey, and commemorates the Second World War.

The other, which commemorates both the First and the Second World War, is in Sittingbourne, and is an avenue flanked by a grove of trees, with a War Memorial as its central feature. There is a plaque at the foot of each tree, on the avenue (and on other surrounding roads), commemorating a named fallen soldier.

Diversity House led a youth group on an exploration of the avenue, and of the local cemetery, in Oct 2017, to find out more about this local historical feature, to identify the key pieces of information gleaned from the plaques and headstones, and to interpret this information to better understand the role Sittingbourne and its people played in both world wars. The age range of the participants was between 6 to 18 years.

Armed with colourful pens and paper, the young people spent the morning locating the plaques and headstones, and chronicling the messages on them, through imprinting the headstones through paper (to make an engraving), and by writing key facts down.

They learned about the significance of the Avenue of Remembrance, finding out that it was one of only two in the country. The young people wrote about their findings, and followed this up with a range of extension activities – photo analysis, stories, poems, songs, diaries and letters. They found out the names and ages of the servicemen and women, and learned about the sacrifices these people made in both world wars.

They also had the opportunity to mull over a key project theme – what about those who didn't get a plaque, or a memorial? How do their stories get told?

Back at the youth club, the young people examined the contribution made by Commonwealth nations – the servicemen and women, particularly in the labour corps, who made their contribution to the war efforts on behalf of the European allies. They found that little has been recorded of this sacrifice. In particular, the young people examined photographs of the many South Africans who died in the sinking of the SS Mendi.

In February 1917 the SS Mendi, a First World War troopship, was carrying 802 men of the South African

Native Labour Corps bound for the Western Front. Many had never seen the sea before. The men had signed up because they believed that, despite being oppressed by the white South African government, if they demonstrated loyalty to the British Empire, it would gain them a voice in their deeply divided land.

On 21 February - in heavy pre-dawn fog near the Isle of Wight - the British merchant ship, the Darro, collided with the SS Mendi. The Mendi was hit side-on with tremendous force and quickly sank. 618 of the Corps drowned in the freezing waters, together with white officers and military passengers, and 33 of the crew.

After learning of this through reading articles and documents on the internet, the young people created poems, words of remembrance and pictures to those who never received any recognition or acknowledgement of their sacrifice. The young people then used their new knowledge of this incident, and of the sacrifices made by African people in the First World War, to begin to think about Africa itself, and the position it had in relation to the UK and its Commonwealth in the past.

The workshop then gave the young people the opportunity to learn about their continent and countries of origin – learning about the geographical location of each country in the continent, its flag, and its history. A better understanding of their identity, and of the role Africa has played in the recent history of the UK, was reached.

A selection of comments from the participants is recorded below:

- "Every time I walk past this road, I shall make sure I look at the plaques and say 'thank you' for their contribution."
- "There are so many more to remember. I know now that I must include the African soldiers, carriers and labourers in my memories and say thank you to all those who made sacrifices in World War One."
- "I had a good time. I learned in detail about the African (involvement) in World War One."
- "I enjoyed this activity and I learned that we should be more grateful when we walk past the trees from the war."

SPREADING THE MESSAGE



A number of special events and activities took place towards the end of the project, to showcase the project's creative, historical and learning material. This included a 'touring exhibition' of seven Kent County Council (KCC) libraries, where a standing demonstration board carried a number of project and photographs and archival objects. This allowed for a wider range of people from all walks of life to engage with, and enjoy, the heritage uncovered by project staff and participants.

The project team also exhibited in venues across the country, including, in October 2018, at an event hosted by Diversity House at The Royal Over-Seas League, (ROSL), in London.

The ROSL is a not-for-profit private members' organisation dedicated to championing international friendship and understanding. It has links to over 100 reciprocal clubs across the world, and holds a vibrant event calendar packed with concerts, talks and exhibitions.

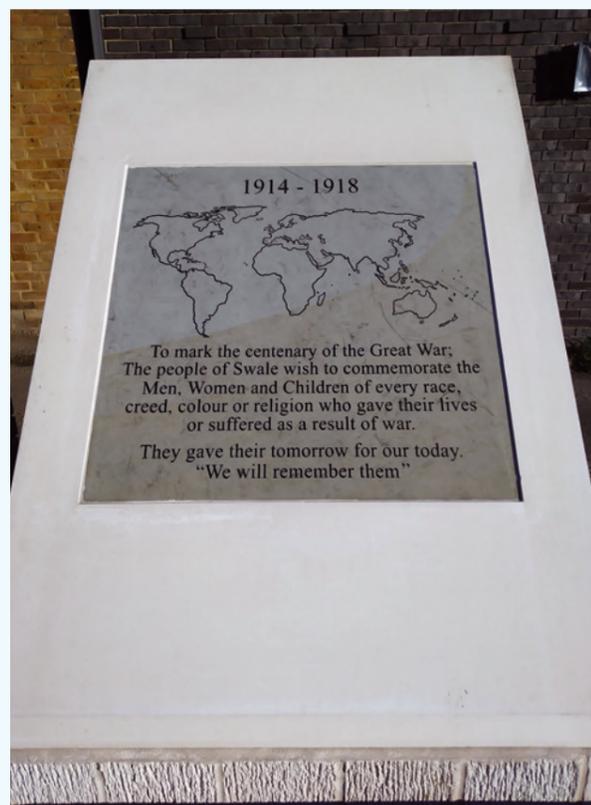
The event included an overview of the project by Christine Locke, and a wide range of creative activity, including Africa war songs by Steven Kasamba, of Bantu Art; the poet Kat Francois, who reflected the sentiments of the lives of African Diasporas with her poem 'Remember Me'; and the launch of 'We Remember', the book published by Diversity House containing research and stories from the project, as well as the story of the life of Walter Tull.

An event a week later, hosted by Diversity House and supported by Swale Borough Council, featured a display called 'Remembering Africans Who Served in the Great War', which consisted of pieces of work created by the Primary school children who participated in the project. The exhibit displayed artworks, artefacts and stories unearthed by the project. The children had produced poems, poppies in the colours of modern African states, and stories of African war heroes, including the original play on the life of Walter Tull. A book containing a manuscript of the play was on sale during the event.

SWALE REMEMBERS ALL

Working with Swale Borough Council, the Diversity House project team were able to host a Civic Reception to celebrate a memorial stone which was unveiled on 28th October 2018 (photo below), as part of its 'Swale Remembers All' inclusive act of remembrance.

Figure 1: Photograph of the memorial stone



The monument formed part of a remembrance to provide a memorial for everyone touched by the events of the First World War, irrespective of nationality or individual heritage.

The event was attended by Christine Locke, Diversity House staff, project stakeholders, and by Councillor Samuel and Mrs Doreen Koffie-Williams, the Mayor and Mayoress of Swale for the civic year 2018-19. The wording on the stone was agreed upon by Swale Borough Council, Diversity House, and the local authority's First World War Steering Committee.

Young people who had participated in the project were present, and handed home-made poppies to guests, and laid a specially designed Commonwealth wreath at the foot of the main monument.

After the service, guests were invited to a reception, followed by a multi-cultural lunch and performances during the afternoon at Phoenix House.

This memorial stone will provide a lasting memorial for the community to recall the sacrifice of all peoples in the First World War, as well as an enduring reminder of the key themes investigated and researched by the 'Breaking the Myths' project.

CHALLENGES

In every project as ambitious as this one, there will always be challenges. As alluded to within the interview with Christine Locke (pg. 6-7), gaining the buy-in from schools was a high barrier to leap.

Schools are busy places with a multitude of conflicting demands and constraints – the National Curriculum; national and county-wide Tests and assessments; teaching staff workload; and an already wide-ranging existing extra-curricular offer, to name but some.

As such, of the 55 local schools that were written to at the outset, 6 responses were forthcoming, and 4 schools agreed to participate in the project. Perhaps more pre-bid focus group activity could have been held jointly with the Local Authority and (provisionally) interested schools, to identify likely partners, and gain input from an earlier stage?

Diversity House clearly developed excellent working relationships with the schools who did participate, as evidenced by the staff and pupil comments in this report, and should be commended for the rapport they built with staff, governors and pupils.

Comments on the Diversity House Facebook page, particularly with regard to the 'Swale Remembers All' event, and the unveiling of the memorial stone, reveal a very small number of residents who did not appreciate the key message behind the memorial.

It is a point of consideration, and no more, that efforts might have been undertaken to have an off-line conversation with such people, to see if closed minds could be opened.

The scale of the project was huge. There were a multitude of events, activities and workshops, which involved an array of participants and stakeholder events. The focus of the project - which was directed at two main geographical areas, Maidstone and Swale Borough Councils - was possibly overly ambitious, although a challenge met with great energy and passion by the Diversity House project team.

STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Dr Anne Samson, Co-ordinator, Great War in Africa Association:

"There was a genuine desire to promote inclusivity and diversity through challenging myths. The focus ... was to promote a balanced awareness of Africa, allowing African people to feel valued whilst (enabling) people to overcome stereotypes and misconceptions."

Yemi Williams, The Voice Newspaper:

"The presentations were very informative and highlighted the importance of knowing our full history."

Primary school student:

"The thing that I enjoyed is learning about more facts about the First World War that I didn't know. I would like to learn more about Africa"

Dr Anne Samson, Co-ordinator, Great War in Africa Association:

"I have been impressed at the range of topics ... and openness to explore new ideas and ways of getting people involved at all levels of education and social status. Accompanying a group of Primary school children to the battlefields of France (allowed for) similarities and differences to be discerned as well as enabling the children to visually imagine what they had been learning. This ... (has) ... been incredibly enriching for all concerned."

Rob Illingworth, Service Development Librarian - Kent County Council Libraries, Registration & Archives:

"This has been a fantastic event. I have been very impressed with the project."

Justin Aggett, Sheppey Matters:

"The depth and breadth of the research project has brought to light the neglected, but essential, voice to our shared collective consciousness of this global conflict."

Primary school student:

"When I was writing my letter, I felt ecstatic that I could be helping Walter Tull get his medal. Because of that, I took my time to write it and I was calm and optimistic. I especially was joyous when I wrote the last two paragraphs"

Caroline George, Heritage Lottery Fund:

"It was great to hear such a range of stories from diverse historians, researchers, archivists and artists... thank you."

Rosemary Dymond, Deputy Lieutenant of Kent:

"An excellent conference. Speakers had so much interesting information, true family stories and a kaleidoscope of community involvement on little told history of human endeavour. The children's work was brilliant. Thank you, Christine, for all your hard work (and for your) vision."

CLlr Mike Whiting, KCC Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment and Swale Borough Council member:

"Through projects like this, our children, and I think a good many adults, will learn for the first time this important part of African and British history, which adds to the long list of things that unite our joint-heritage and helps our mutual understanding of the positives for British society today."

Dr Anne Samson, Co-ordinator, Great War in Africa Association:

"Of all the many projects ... (I have been involved in) ... the historiography of the campaigns in Africa during World War 1 have been greatly enriched by the approach and ethos Diversity House has brought to its 'Breaking the Myths' project. Their best practice should be shared with others and future projects concerning Africa would do well to adopt a similar methodology and open-mindedness."

CLlr Derek Butler, Mayor of Maidstone and Maidstone Borough Council Member:

"It is a most poignant time in our history when we reflect on what was happening a hundred years ago. It is right that we should be made aware of the truth of what happened and for that truth to be properly reflected in today's society and media. Then for us to learn from our history - and try not to make the same mistakes again."

"I was not aware of the involvement of Africans in the First World War or that Africa was an arena for the War and I am sure ... the majority of people living in the United Kingdom would not be aware of this either."

"It is important that people's nationalities and cultures are remembered and celebrated ... and if there are pieces missing then this needs to be addressed and people made aware."

Feedback and insight from participating Secondary school students has been collated and added here below, under the three central themes which arose within the feedback:

On learnings about Africa and Africans in the First World War:

- "I thought it was very interesting and I loved learning about Africans in World War One."
- "I have learnt about how people from the war are remembered, how we should respect them and what Africans did."
- "I feel quite complete as I didn't know much about this, I felt today I have learnt a lot about what Africans did in WW1."
- "I learnt that African soldiers made a great impact."
- "I've learnt that Africa went to war. I felt interested because we hadn't learnt about it before."

On learnings about different cultural views and responses:

- "I enjoyed thinking about other people's views."
- "I learnt that there are lots of different types of commemoration."
- "I learnt that Africans told their stories orally."
- "I have learnt that English people remember soldiers differently to people in Africa."
- "I learnt that Africans don't put up memorials to soldiers, they tell stories as a way of commemorating."

On learnings about Africa in a wider context:

- "I learnt that lots of languages are spoken in Africa."
- "I learnt that in WW1, Africa was owned by countries in Europe."
- "I found out that Africa was taken over by many countries (and) that Africa gave resources to other countries."
- "I learnt that Africa had resources that other countries wanted."

Social media feedback in response to Diversity House's end of project event:

Mitch Mitchell - @ArmyFA_Chairman:

"So right. The contribution and sacrifice of Africa - and of course the whole Commonwealth - was immense and I think at times forgotten. We mustn't forget"

GWAA - @GWEAA:

"We need to get personal ... at individual level, and connect at every level, and value the truth, even if, especially if it does not fit our current narrative. That was we break down barriers and foster understanding."

FINAL COMMENTS

From conversations with Christine Locke, Project Lead and CEO of Diversity House, and from the amount of evidence of activity she has provided for this report – plans, published books, play scripts, letters, artwork and artefacts – some things clearly stand out:

1. The vision of Christine Locke at the outset, to bring such a wide-ranging project, with its far-reaching aims and objectives, to fruition, has been clear and unwavering throughout.

Her central theme – enabling communities to look to the past, to explore the heritage that surrounds them, to provide a deeper perspective of the whole notion of ‘community’ – has shone through.

The list of outputs and outcomes outlined in Tables 2 and 3 are just a flavour of the things that could have been added. Christine’s vision was to deliver an ambitious project, to immerse children, young people, and the community at large, to provoke them to look at heritage in a new way, and this was achieved.
2. The letters and comments from children and young people show the extent to which they have become involved in this project in a very meaningful way. Their impassioned letters to their MP about Walter Tull; their fascination at the discovery of the meaning behind the trees and their plaques that line the streets of Sittingbourne; and their boundless creative energy displayed in such a wide range of activity has been apparent throughout.

This report received a large number of photographs showing young people engaging with heritage – whether on site visits to France or London; or through writing scripts or performing plays closer to home – and in all the photographic evidence examined they are (almost always!) either doing two things: a) listening, (as at the talk given by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission) or b) enjoying themselves.

Learning about our shared heritage, and about the sacrifice given in the past by different peoples, doesn’t need to be dry and monochrome – it needs to be engaging, especially for the younger generation, and all evidence seen by this report leads it to conclude that the project participants engaged in the two-year activity with vigour and curiosity.

3. This report feels it pertinent to mention ‘legacy’. This is a difficult concept to discuss with any certainty, just after the project has been wrapped up, because we can only guess at what a legacy of something can be.

Nonetheless, this report is confident that the large number of tangible legacies left by the project will stand as reference points for some time to come. This is most obviously recognisable in the memorial stone, which future generations will walk past and read until a considerable time in the future. But there is a digital legacy too, which has the potential to be accessed many times over the next few years.

Some examples of these:
 - i. The creation of World War One heritage website page, with information about the project’s activities and events. (2)
 - ii. The development of a SoundCloud account to record the family stories of people from different backgrounds. (3)
 - iii. A YouTube account created to run videos from the project. (4)
 - iv. An Instagram page set up to display photographs of activities from the project. (5).
4. Finally, it is clear to see how the participants, as well as the wider community, have benefitted from this project, through gaining the following:
 - i. The acquisition of new skills (the interpretation, identification and recording of heritage skills for e.g.).
 - ii. The learning about different times, peoples, traditions, and societies.
 - iii. The enabling of communities to feel more connected and cohesive through a greater understanding of their history and heritage.
 - iv. The creation of an opportunity by Diversity House and its stakeholders for the project – through its legacy materials and digital sites – to act as a reference point for current (and future) global debates and issues.

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FIRST WORLD WAR AND AFRICA

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