

Laidlaw Programme Reflective Report

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Title of Scholarship Project:	Mapping Colonial Subjects in the French Resistance

Describe the research you have conducted during this period.

During my research period, I have been identifying and ‘mapping’ men from French North Africa who fought in the French Internal Resistance (1940-1944) in Paris. The aim of the project was to create an interactive map of Paris displaying individual profiles of and connections between French North Africans who fought in the French Internal Resistance. This project forms part of Professor Nina Wardleworth’s broader, ongoing research into identifying members of the French Internal Resistance from the French Empire. Which in turn is part of a larger movement in scholarship to challenge Eurocentric historiography and decolonise our telling of history.

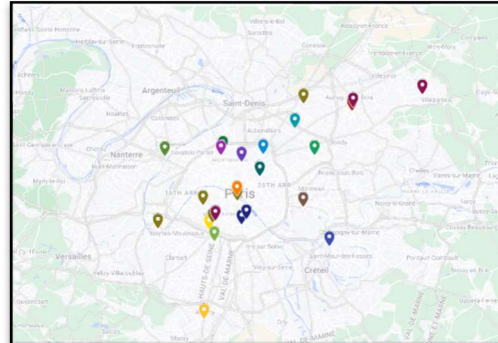


The first stage of research involved working in the French Military Archives in Vincennes, Paris. My research partner, Cothney Lasaracina, and I identified 60 individuals from Professor Wardleworth’s extensive database with the ‘75’ Département Code (for Paris) and accessed their individual ‘GR 16 P’ files at Vincennes. These contained the archival documents necessary (applications for military recognition, medical records, personal letters etc.) to create individual fact files that would later form the profiles on our interactive map. I then cross-referenced this information with digitised archival resources; most notably, the Ministry of Defence’s *Memoire des Hommes* and *FranceArchives*, the French

National Archives. These resources allowed me to document a wide range of experiences; from decorated veterans to escaped prisoners of war; men who struggled for military recognition, some who never received it; those who were severely injured during the Liberation of Paris; and those who fought until the dying days of the war. In one case, I contacted the historical team at *Occupied Alderney* to enquire into the unique journey of a French North African soldier

from Drancy to the Channel Islands. During my week in Paris, I also had the opportunity to visit the *Musée de la Résistance Nationale*, the *Musée National de l'histoire de l'immigration* and have a guided-tour of *Mont Valérien* all of which, alongside topic-relevant reading, allowed me to contextualise my research.

The next stage of research involved transforming these written profiles into an interactive map. Our supervisor chose to use Google MyMaps as the medium to present our findings. All the profiles display key information about each soldier (first and last name, date and place of birth, profession, FFI Group) as well as a short paragraph detailing their experience of the French Internal Resistance and a photograph,



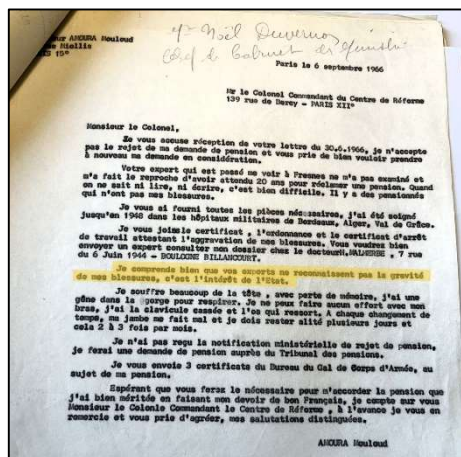
if their original file contained one. The pins (each representing an individual Resistance fighter) are plotted using the addresses found in their 'GR 16 P' or 'GR 19 P' files and are colour-coded based on FFI Group, representing the clusters of French North African Resistance fighters scattered across Paris. Having the map as a visual aid to accompany our written research allows the public to conceptualise the scale of French North African presence in the Parisian resistance. This tool is particularly impactful upon a French audience, whose pre-conceived ideas about the Resistance may be challenged by a visualisation of French North African influence. I hope that the Map will have the greatest impact upon a Parisian audience, who will see these historical figures in relation to their own lives in the modern city.

Working on this project, I have been entrusted with the telling of marginalised stories, and I hope to have handled their stories with compassion and sensitivity.

How is the research work you have been undertaking impactful or important?

The Resistance is a great source of French national pride and cultural identity. However, the public's perception of the Resistance is not reflective of history reality. In the French collective memory, the Resistance is exaggerated in scope and significance, and, crucially, in the eyes of this project, fails to commemorate the war efforts of French North African soldiers. Therefore, this project is significant in contributing towards the decolonisation of the French commemoration of the Second World War.

I was first drawn to this project because of its profound, real-time impact. At her inaugural lecture, Professor Wardleworth spoke about how at her exhibition at Mont Valérien, schoolchildren were, perhaps for the first time, seeing stories that resonated with them and their roots. French North Africans have been long underrepresented, or misrepresented, in the history of the French Resistance and this project, in identifying and ‘mapping’ these individuals, seeks to



challenge the white-washed collective memory of the Resistance. For example, this research exposes the institutional discrimination of French bureaucracy towards French North Africans; with many individuals facing linguistic barriers or lacking the necessary documentation to receive military acknowledgement for their service in the Resistance. I was particularly moved by the story of Mouloud Amoura, a decorated French North African war veteran, who endured a 20-year long legal battle to receive a pension after being severely

wounded in 1945. In a letter of appeal to the French military, he writes ‘I understand that your experts do not recognise the severity of my wounds, it’s in the interest of the State’.

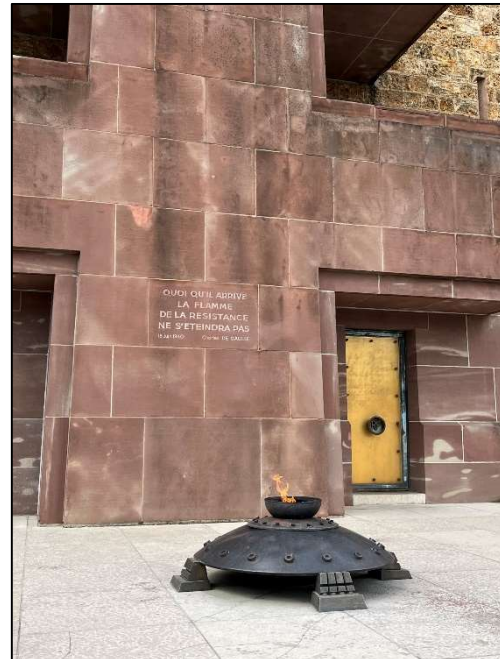
Although historians have long been aware of the role of colonial soldiers in the French Resistance, public interest in the topic is far more recent. As France celebrated the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of Paris on the 25th of August this year, it was uplifting to see representation of French North African soldiers in mainstream media. Therefore, this project is important as it plays a vital role in diversifying the histories of the Resistance available to the public; it makes significant contributions to the commemoration of the Second World War in France; and further bridges the gap between historical reality and public perception of the Resistance.

What activities have you been involved in to disseminate your research?

The interactive map of Paris is the final product of our research and the medium through which we will disseminate our research to the public. We hope that this tool will have a particularly profound impact on a French audience, who will have to reconcile the findings of this research with their own understanding of the Resistance; and schoolchildren, since this project aims to contribute to the decolonisation of collective memory, whose roots lie in the education system.

I have contacted the historical team at Occupied Alderney about Joseph Chiche, one of the individuals I researched who was interned at one of the camps on the island. They are interested in our research project, and I am producing a ‘prisoner biography’ to feature on their website and in their records. Using their expertise, I hope to learn more about Chiche’s unique story.

In addition, I hope to disseminate my research amongst the British Academic community, as well as the French. First, I intend to prepare and present a paper on my research at The Undergraduate Research Experience (UGRE) conference in February 2025. Later in May 2025, I hope to present alongside my supervisor, Professor Wardleworth, at the 'Demobbed: The Social, Cultural, Political and Economic Legacies of Military Service' Conference at Manchester Metropolitan University. This would require me to consider my research in the context of demobilisation, using the case study of Mouloud Amoura, rather than looking at his time in the French Internal Resistance. His was the largest of the 'GR 16 P' files I looked at during my week at archives in Vincennes and largely concerned the post-war years of his life. Therefore, presenting at this conference would be an incredible opportunity to explore the versatility of the research I have conducted this summer and delve deeper into Amoura's complex experience of demobilisation. Next summer, I will be completing my six-week Leadership in Action placement at Mont Valérien. This will further expand my knowledge on this topic, since, as well as tour guiding, I may be able to contribute to a research project, and having visited the site in July, I am keen to contribute to their work in any way possible.



What impact has conducting this research had on you?

This research project has had a profound personal impact on me. Before this summer, I had vague ambitions to work in research, but the academic world seemed intimidating and impenetrable to me. However, I have been pleasantly surprised at how eager archivists, researchers, and historians are to advise and collaborate with an undergraduate researcher and I feel so fortunate to have had such positive responses. The highlight of this research period was the trip of Paris, during which I worked in the archives at Vincennes and immersed myself in the history of the Resistance. These experiences have consolidated my desire to work in the research field; this goal now feels tangible and specific. In addition, this research project has had a deep emotional impact on me; reading about the injustices faced by the North African resistance fighters has encouraged me to pursue a broader understanding of the post-colonial era through post-graduate study.

Above all, this research project has allowed me to grow in confidence and confront imposter syndrome. Navigating the academic world for the first time, with the additional linguistic challenge of French, and sporadically Arabic, was difficult but rewarding. French was my source language and English was my target language for the interactive map, meaning I was handling archival

material in French and encountering unknown medial and military vocabulary. Though challenging, this experience was invaluable and incredibly relevant to my undergraduate degree in French and Italian.

What leadership skills have you gained from this research period?

Working and connecting with other academics has been one of the most rewarding parts of this project and has reaffirmed to me the importance of collaboration and communication in leadership. This included working alongside Cothney, my research partner, and Professor Wardleworth, our project supervisor, as well as having the courage to ask questions at the Vincennes archives and contact expert historians. I now recognise that having the vulnerability to challenge yourself is not a weakness, but in fact a sign that, if you are asking questions and being transparent, you want to become a more informed, and thus a better, leader.

After reflecting on my Quintax report, it became clear that organisation was one of my weaker traits and I understood that my work towards research report was part of a larger framework that require steady diligence and careful adherence to deadlines. It was important for me to limit the scope of my research to avoid tangents, however interesting, to ensure that I would produce relevant and high-quality research. Although I had the flexibility of deciding my own hours, I decided on a 9-to-5 approach to maximise my productivity and used 'Notion' to ensure I kept track of all the elements of this project. I intend to apply this approach to my personal university studies as of October.

In addition, this project taught me resilience, an invaluable quality in a leader, since this summer I have had to navigate the professional and academic world in French. I experienced some hiccups (such as worrying over the difference between a *dossier* and a *cahier* 'archival speak', only to find they referred to the exact same thing!) but I persisted in French, determined to make the most of invaluable insight into the research world.

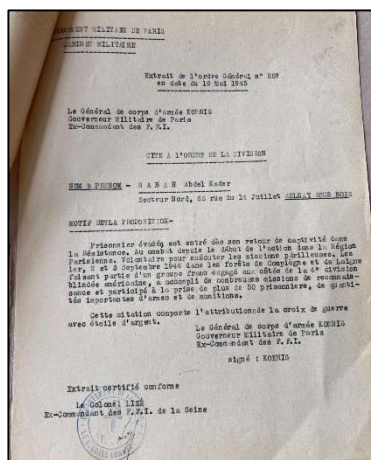
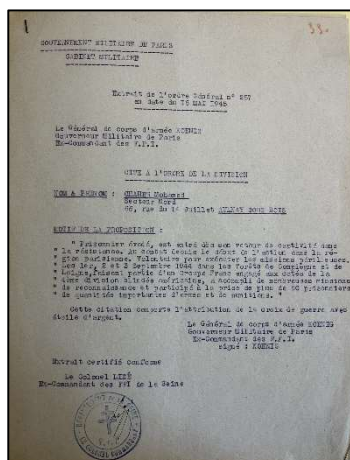
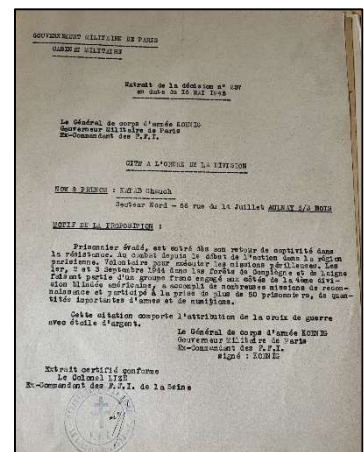
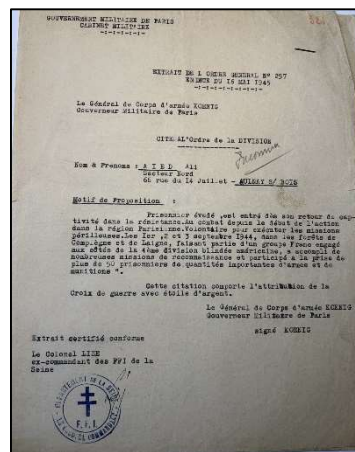
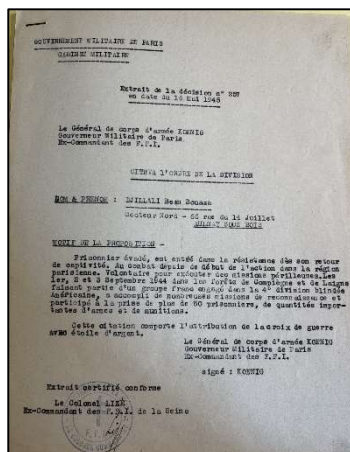
What are your future career/educational plans or continued research plans?

After reflecting on this research period, I have a much clearer idea of my future career and educational plans. I hope to continue work on this research project, by producing papers for the Undergraduate Research Experience (UGRE) conference in February and the 'Demobbed: The Social, Cultural, Political and Economic Legacies of Military Service' Conference at Manchester Metropolitan University in May 2025. Through these experiences, I hope to further develop my academic portfolio and learn more from the example of my supervisor, Professor Wardleworth, who has generously provided these opportunities. Next summer, during my six-week Leadership in Action period, I will intern at Mont Valérien as a tour guide and research assistant to further contribute towards the commemoration of marginalised communities in French history. After my undergraduate studies, I would like to complete a Postcolonial Studies postgraduate degree since this project has further developed my interest in alternative histories.

Research Project Highlights



Amoura Mouloud's GR 16 P dossier, the very first one I opened at the Vincennes archives, containing over 200 documents. This research project has looked at the documents relevant to his involvement in the Paris Internal Resistance (1940-1944). However, this file will be used as our case study for the 'Demobbed' Conference at Manchester Metropolitan University, and we will instead look at Mouloud's experience of demobilisation. He was severely injured in both 1940 and 1945 whilst fighting in the French army however his injuries were not legally recognised as 'war injuries' until 1968, after a 20-year long legal battle. Yet in 1969, he contained to be scrutinised by the French military when, despite his being a decorated war veteran, they questioned whether he was deserving of his medals.



I discovered a cluster of individuals (Ali Aied, Mohamed Chaher, Ben Bouaza Djillali, Chaouch Katab and Abdel Kader Rabah) who received Croix de Guerre avec étoile d'argent for the exact same mission. They were awarded this medal by General Koenig in May 1945 for being 'volunteers for perilous missions'.

à l' % de la Division
02.10.21 du 22 Sept. 1917

Pendant la période d'attaque
devant Verdun le groupe
avait perdu plus de la moitié
de son effectif, a continué à
arriver toute les liaisons au
front sous les bombardements
des plus violents avec une bra-
voue et un dévouement méritant
l'admiration de tous.

Chercheur de la Légion d'Hon-
neur décret du 5 janvier 1954
no du 12.1.54
carte du C. V. 39-25
des n° 267 du 6-5-52

Evidence of Ménahe Chouraqui's Légion d'Honneur, found in the digitised French National Archives. Chouraqui was a WW1 veteran, having fought at Verdun in 1917, and, despite significant injuries, he undertook resistance activities from as early as December 1940. Over the course of his military career, he was awarded with the Croix de Guerre avec étoile de bronze, the Croix du Combattant Volontaire de la Guerre 1939-1945, the Légion d'Honneur and the Médaille Coloniale.

Supervisor

Phoebe has made a really important contribution to the wider research project through her research work this summer. I was always very impressed by her hard work and dedication and her willingness to engage in discussions with me to shape her research processes and outputs.

Phoebe wished to develop her organisational skills. I observed that she demonstrated excellent skills of time management, and clear organisation of her materials and profiles. She learnt how to build a google map to present her finding by following instructions methodically and by thinking (and recording) carefully about how her decision about which parts of the research to prioritise would shape the narrative differently.

She really pushed herself outside of her comfort zone to undertake research work in the archives in France and to meet with the research partner at Mont-Valérien. Both settings can be intimidating for an established researcher, with their numerous unwritten rules and codes, but Phoebe drew upon the leadership skills that she was learning to build contacts, draw up research goals and review her progress. She did all of this in another language which is even more impressive.

Once back in the UK she has reached out to community organisations and other researchers to gain more information about the resistance fighters that she was writing about. She communicated clearly and professionally with these groups and has managed to make a useful contribution to their work.

Her research outputs (Profiles and Interactive Map) of the profiles of North African resistance fighters are incredibly detailed and nuanced, taking their stories from the confines of colonial archival stereotypes and investigating questions of these men's agency in the face of wartime constraints.

Phoebe has great plans for this dissemination this academic year, through the UGRE and co-presenting with me at an academic conference.

Looking ahead to her Leadership in Action placement at Mont-Valerien next summer, Phoebe should continue to lead with passion, integrity and empathy. This placement will naturally develop her communication skills still further and her intercultural competences

Signature of Scholar: Phoebe Williams Date: 16 / 9 / 24

Signature of Project Leader: N.A.Wardleworth Date: 16 / 9 / 24