

<b>Institution: University of Aberdeen</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 30 - History</b>
<b>Title of case study:</b> Medieval Ironwork and Dover Castle: Generating Economic and Cultural Impacts Through Collaboration with English Heritage
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Decorative ironwork pervaded medieval England. In 1999 Jane Geddes published the first specialised study of the medium: <i>Medieval Decorative Ironwork in England</i>. Its findings generated impact when English Heritage decided to re-furnish Dover Castle in the fashion of its regal hey-day around 1180. All the iron elements in the furniture were based on the precise descriptions and dates available in <i>Medieval Decorative Ironwork in England</i>. Geddes helped train smiths and carpenters for the job. Visitor numbers and income increased when the project opened in 2009 and by 2010/11 had risen by 22 per cent and 48 per cent respectively. The launch of Dover Castle as an enhanced visitor attraction improved the tourist footfall in Dover town. In addition, two major TV programmes have expanded the cultural reach of this research.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Ironwork permeated medieval English material culture. Ranging from the hinges of doors to the fastenings of chests, such ironwork was not merely functional. It was also decorative and adorned churches and castles alike. Despite the fundamental role decorative ironwork played in embellishing and elaborating medieval built environments, the medium received scant mention in the canon of medieval art before Jane Geddes began her research.</p> <p><i>Medieval Decorative Ironwork in England</i> (1999) began as a much shorter study for a PhD by Jane Geddes at London University in 1978. After Geddes joined the University of Aberdeen (1 October 1990-present), she elaborated the research into a comprehensive compendium of the later middle ages (1100-1500), published by the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1999. (1) The book provides unprecedented detail both about the carpentry of doors and chests, and about the precise way in which iron was fashioned. Over 600 sites, mainly in churches in England, and an equivalent number abroad were studied. Evidence from illuminated manuscripts provided further information about authentic colour and the deployment of decorative iron in secular situations. The author learned blacksmithing as part of the study. The book is set out in such a way that designs for a particular epoch can be readily appreciated. A lavishly illustrated analytical section is followed by a catalogue, essentially the national corpus of decorative ironwork still surviving in churches and museums, supplemented by antiquarian drawings of lost material. The scope of the book makes it especially useful to the cultural and heritage industries. Its layout, by period, pattern and technique, allows current artistic designers to identify easily the appropriate designs for their particular location and date. The catalogue describes how each door and chest is constructed as carpentry, and how its decorative iron fittings are fashioned. The research involved finding, photographing, measuring and in many cases taking plaster casts of details of the iron.</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b></p> <p>(1) Jane Geddes, <i>Medieval Decorative Ironwork in England</i> (Report of the Research Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of London, no.59, 1999)</p> <p>Indicators of quality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The book, with its 600 photographs, was an expensive production, but pre-publication applications and references demonstrated the national need for the book. A range of charitable trusts, including the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, the Radcliffe Trust and Paul Getty Junior Trust subscribed £17,500 towards its publication, which testifies to its perceived value.</li> <li>• According to the peer reviewer's report on the MSS to the publisher, 'There is no doubt that Jane Geddes is the expert on medieval ironwork in this country, and the typescript that she has submitted shows that she is also very well versed in the wider European material as well. The scholarship seems to me to be excellent...I was also very impressed by the verve</li> </ul>

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of the writing’.

- Review from *Medieval Archaeology*, XLIV (2000), pp. 370-71, Tim Tatton-Brown: ‘This splendid volume should be on the shelves of everyone who has an interest in medieval archaeology...All in all, this is a magnificent work, which has straightaway become the ‘Bible’ for English medieval ironwork.’
- Review from *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 154 (2001), pp. 205-7, Brian Gilmour: ‘It should remain the standard work on this subject, as such a big task is unlikely to be repeated in the foreseeable future...To have recorded, identified, catalogued, dated and made this information available in an interesting and accessible way to those of us who might want to take some of this research a stage further...is a remarkable achievement.’

#### 4. Details of the impact

The town of Dover is a decaying area, due to the decline of the ferries and swift transit of the Channel Tunnel trains. In this context, English Heritage embarked (in 2008) on a comprehensive redevelopment of its Dover Castle site. The £2.45m project was core funded by the government’s Sea Change Programme which aims to drive regeneration and economic growth in seaside towns. The new display in the Great Tower and Inner Bailey aimed to increase the number of visitors to the castle, entice them to stay longer in the town, and stimulate employment. It also sought to do so in accordance with English Heritage’s mission to preserve and present heritage in an authentic manner.

*Medieval Decorative Ironwork in England* is widely recognised as a bench mark for the study of medieval blacksmithing. As a result of the publication Geddes has acted as consultant to various cathedral conservation inventories, at Lincoln and Salisbury. The task at Dover was to provide appropriate fittings for approximately 30 bare doorways connected to the royal apartments, paying due attention to the social status of each entrance, and the existence of some original pintles still in the masonry. In each case the correct timber framing was required, and the correct types of hand-made nails to fasten the different types of hinges. Many rooms also required chests, coffers and aumbries, with decorative grilles in the chapel. Based on examples in *Medieval Decorative Ironwork in England*, actual designs were drawn up by English Heritage historians working with the designer Kit Surrey and the architectural firm Purcell, Miller and Tritton, with numerous modifications supplied by Geddes. Thus, essential elements of the redevelopment of the castle by a team of 150 craftsmen between 2008 and August 2009 when the Castle opened were guided by Geddes’ research. (1)

The process of redevelopment, the re-opening of the castle followed by a Time Team TV special, and a subsequent BBC4 documentary inspired by Geddes’ research and work in Dover generated a range of cultural and economic benefits.

**4.1. Imparting Rare Skills to Craftsmen, Generating Employment.** At the outset, Geddes visited blacksmiths and historic joinery specialists to explain how to work in the medieval fashion, with the spontaneity and freedom which distinguishes medieval craftsmanship. For example, the blacksmiths were Julian Coode of Littlebourne, Kent, and David Gregory of Cobalt Blacksmiths, Nuffield, Oxon. Developing the skills he acquired from the Dover commission, Julian Coode has gone on to recreate ferramenta of the 1180s for restorations at Canterbury Cathedral. David Gregory, using the Dover material as a case study, has encouraged younger blacksmiths to work with individuality and confidence. (1, 2)

**4.2. Economic Benefits to English Heritage and Dover.** As a result of the redevelopment English Heritage has benefitted from an increase of visitors to their stimulating new attraction. Visitor numbers have expanded since the castle re-opened. 62,000 attended in August 2009, the opening month. Figures supplied by English Heritage shows the boost to visitor numbers, income, and surplus for the organisation since the year prior to the re-opening of the castle. Compared to the base year (2008/9), visitor numbers increased by 9 per cent in 2009/10, and then by about 19-22 per cent in 2010/11, 2011/12, and 2012/13. More dramatically, the total income generated by the castle expanded by 25 per cent in 2009/10 and then by 48, 52 and 65 per cent in 2010/11, 2011/12, and 2012/13. The castle’s revenue surplus (excess of revenue over expenditure) has

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more than doubled in the same period. (3) More broadly, the redeveloped castle generated economic benefits in Dover both by creating additional employment for guards and guides, and as a major element of an overall expansion of visitor numbers and spends. Dover District Council has provided statistics for the impact of tourism as a whole, comparing 2006 and 2009. In 2009 the total value of tourism in Dover is estimated to have been £210,599,000, up 6 per cent since 2006. In total £180,996,000 was spent on day trips to Dover in 2009 by all visitors, up 8 per cent since 2006. This income employed 3,828 FTE in the town. 12 per cent of the total visitor spend went on visits to local attractions, of which the castle is a premier site. (4)

**4.3. Cultural Benefits to Visitors and through Television Documentaries.** The expanding visitor numbers to the castle represent not only an economic benefit for English Heritage, and for Dover, but also a cultural benefit for those visitors. English Heritage commissioned visitor feedback, interviewing 139 people during August-September 2010. The response was strongly positive. (5) All interviewees felt that all the family could learn from the new presentation; the past had come to life with vivid colours; there was a clear sense of period, better than the previous bare white walls; they trusted English Heritage to present an accurate re-creation. The understanding of many visitors has been enhanced by a set of accompanying educational packages to explain the artefacts and history – including the ironwork. (5) The reconstructed castle can also be experienced virtually through an online tour. (6)

In addition, Geddes' iron research has featured substantially in popular television documentaries. In summer 2009 Channel Four broadcast its premier archaeological show, a *Time Team Special*, on the reconstruction of the castle, which remains available on 4OD. This programme has reached between 1 and 2.5 million viewers. (7) One viewer left a comment online highlighting the centrality of research to authentic redevelopment: 'The Great Tower occupies a central place in the mainstream of English history. Provided that the intervention is backed by compelling research and that damage to the historic fabric could be avoided, serious attempts to better reveal its historical associations with important people or events in the past should be justified. This is what English Heritage has done at Dover Castle'. (8) English Heritage's 2010 survey found that many visitors had been inspired to visit the castle by the documentary (contributing to the economic as well as cultural benefits of the redevelopment). (5) A further documentary, *Metalworks! The Blacksmith's Tale*, was broadcast on BBC4 in collaboration with the Victoria and Albert Museum, on 16 May 2012 and 2 December 2012, focusing on medieval decorative ironwork, with audiences of 479,000 and 177,000 respectively. Geddes spoke in depth about key items. One viewer wrote to the BBC: 'Professor Jane Geddes was an absolutely outstanding presenter...Her enthusiasm was infectious...she is a terrific communicator. Please could we have a programme about the development of clockworks and her other interests presented by Professor Geddes'. (9)

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

(1) The Senior Historian in the Curatorial Department at English Heritage has endorsed the account of Geddes' work presented here (including with the craftsmen) and described her input as 'very important'. In addition, correspondence from Geddes to English Heritage (2009, held on file) illustrates the detailed advice she provided and shows how this advice drew directly from her book. Finally, for a *Financial Times* review explaining Geddes' role, see Nicole Swengley, 'Very 12th century: The restoration of an English castle has highlighted the potential of pattern and craft skills', *Financial Times*, 8 Aug. 2009, p. 4. For details of the restoration see also:

<http://www.culture24.org.uk/history+%26+heritage/art70750>

(2) See <http://www.cobalt-blacksmiths.co.uk/restoration05.html> for the designs that were drawn by Cobalt Blacksmiths from *Medieval Decorative Ironwork in England* at Dover Castle. To confirm that this project inspired him to train younger smiths in these ironwork skills, see: <http://gordonrusselldesignmuseum.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/russian-suprematist-style-in-cotswolds.html#/2012/10/russian-suprematist-style-in-cotswolds.html>. To confirm that another blacksmith used the ironwork skills subsequently at Canterbury, see: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVK4\\_1mBBz4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVK4_1mBBz4)

(3) 'Performance Growth at Dover Castle', an English Heritage Report supplied to use by their Head Historic Properties Curator and available on request, corroborates visitor numbers from 2008 through 2013.

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(4) Visit Kent statistics for economic impact on Dover 2006-2009, 2009 corroborate visitor numbers and visitor spend:

[http://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/library/Dover\\_Tourism\\_Economic\\_Impact\\_Estimates\\_2009.pdf](http://www.visitkentbusiness.co.uk/library/Dover_Tourism_Economic_Impact_Estimates_2009.pdf)

(5) The cited details of visitor feedback are confirmed in a powerpoint presentation entitled 'Great Tower Interpretation Evaluation Research', prepared for English Heritage by BDRC Continental (a market research company).

(6) For this online virtual tour of Dover Castle with doors and furniture, see:

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/dover-castle/great-tower/virtual-tour/>

(7) For viewing figures of Time Team, see:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2012/oct/19/channel-4-time-team>

(8) For the Time Team episode including viewer comments, see:

<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/time-team-specials/episode-guide/series-1/episode-4>

(9) Viewing figures supplied in correspondence between Geddes and the BBC producer of the *Metalworks!* programme. Viewer letter sent to the BBC (copy on file). For the programme itself see:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01hr877>