

<b>Institution: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: D31 - Classics</b>
<b>Title of case study: Representing Chedworth Roman Villa</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research undertaken for The National Trust at the Romano-British villa at Chedworth (Glos.) has contributed to the re-display of the villa in a project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and others. This includes the creation of a 'popular' book on the villa and its context, a new site guidebook, an audio-visual guide, the displays and signage and the new display in the site museum. The impact of the research can therefore be summarised as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributing to the preservation and better presentation of cultural heritage</li> <li>• Influencing the methods and ideas of heritage/marketing/design professionals</li> <li>• Developing stimuli to tourism and contributing to the quality of the tourist/visitor experience.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Research conducted between October 2010 and June 2011 by Dr. A.S. Esmonde Cleary, Reader in Roman Archaeology at the University of Birmingham, concerned two principal areas: (i) the collation and analysis of the evidence for the development and use of the Romano-British villa at Chedworth (Glos.) in the Roman period; (ii) contextualisation of the evidence from the villa within the wider fields of the study of Romano-British villas and of late Roman aristocratic behaviour more generally. Research was conducted on behalf of The National Trust and findings were used to underpin the outputs listed below (R1 and R2). Esmonde Cleary was identified as a suitable partner because of his membership of the National Trust committee on the Chedworth villa and because of his proven research leadership in the area of late Roman Britain.</p> <p>The bulk of the Chedworth villa was uncovered in the summer of 1864 and has never been published, a situation complicated by the lack of site records and the excavated material being disposed of. Subsequent twentieth-century excavations have often suffered from the same problems, though more recent ones have been executed to modern standards and are largely ready for publication. Research on the primary evidence of the villa fabric and the remaining finds, on the unpublished archive held by the National Trust and on the published material, has allowed a narrative of the development of the villa and its likely uses in the fourth century.</p> <p>The information thus gained has been placed in the context of the study of other Romano-British villas of the fourth century, particularly the larger, more elaborate ones, and particularly the important group in the Cotswolds of which Chedworth is a member. In addition, wider knowledge of late Roman villas in Europe and of what their plans represent in terms of social and cultural structures and use has been applied to Chedworth to inform discussion of the excavated remains. A notable feature of the villa is the quantity and quality of the mosaics and other decorative elements. A novel interpretation concerns the importance of hunting to the late Roman aristocrat, as evidenced at Chedworth. In addition a programme of laser scanning of the visible remains was carried out to generate a detailed record of the upstanding fabric. This survey will feed into academic research on the villa by analysing which stonework is in situ Roman-period and which is related to the various phases of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century consolidation and display of the villa, the latter in itself of considerable interest in the study of the presentation of the heritage to the public. It will also be a management tool for the National Trust both as a detailed record and since regular re-survey will show how the structures have responded to, for example, environmental conditions such as freeze and thaw cycles.</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b> (indicative maximum of six references)</p> <p><b>Research outputs:</b></p> <p>R1) A.S. Esmonde Cleary, <i>Chedworth: life in a Roman villa</i>, The History Press (2013) <b>[listed in REF2]</b></p> <p>R2) A.S. Esmonde Cleary, <i>The Roman West A.D.200-500: an archaeological study</i>, Cambridge</p>

## Impact case study (REF3b)

University Press (2013) [listed in REF2]

**Research grants:**

- 1) A.S. Esmonde Cleary, Chedworth Revealed, The National Trust, 01.2011 - 06.2011, £12,500.
- 2) A.S. Esmonde Cleary, Chedworth Laser Scanning Project, The National Trust, 06.2011-07.2012, £18,688.

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

Dr. Esmonde Cleary was approached by The National Trust in 2010 to contribute to the development of the Chedworth Roman villa through the undertaking of the research detailed above. During the period of the research (October 2010 – June 2011), Esmonde Cleary was fully integrated into the structures put in place by The National Trust under the 'Chedworth Revealed' project in order to design, outfit and interpret the site of Chedworth Roman villa within the context of the Heritage Lottery Fund cover-building. In particular he was a member of and expert adviser to the: Interpretation Team; Archaeology, Archives and Conservation Board; as well as to the commercial contractors (Furneaux Stewart) for undertaking the work. Initially, therefore, impact was upon the methods and ideas of the professionals with whom he worked. Insights from the research project conducted by Esmonde Cleary at all times informed the choices made about how to present the site to the visiting public [see source 1 below]. These included:

- The basic concept of 'The Golden Age of Roman Britain'
- The idea that this should challenge popular stereotypes of the Roman period
- The concept of the multi-media presentation as a weekend 'house party'
- The characters to be involved in this presentation, their social standing, their attitudes, their dress, food etc.
- How such characters could help explain why the villa was the way it was (lay-out, use of rooms, décor, social rituals etc.).

Such considerations also informed the production of the new site guidebook [source 2], the new signage at the site, the creation of a series of artist's reconstructions of the villa and or parts of the villa, which in turn were used in the new displays and the guidebook in order to give a common 'message' and visual language across the various forms of presentation to visitors.

During the building and development process, impact was also upon The National Trust itself. The project was run within the context of the organisation's mission to inform the visitors to its properties, such as Chedworth, with the results of up-to-date academic research appropriately presented. This meant that the various outputs described above, and also including the History Press book (output R1 above), were created with one or more of The National Trust's market segments (defined by criteria such as age, purpose of visit etc.) clearly in view. The overall aim of the mission was to optimise the 'visitor experience' and to maximise the number of different segments addressed. The success of this in the new presentation and the centrality of academic research-derived advice has made Chedworth a model for other National Trust properties as they come to be upgraded.

Since the reopening of the Chedworth site in April 2012, Esmonde Cleary's research has made a significant contribution to the quality of the visitor experience at Chedworth. The new presentation of the site is much more comprehensive, varied and up-to-date than the previous presentation, providing the visiting public with a much richer suite of information and stimuli to draw upon. Visitor numbers increased from 32,401 in 2011-2012, to 78,961 in 2012-2013, after the reopening [source 3]. This increase in visitor numbers has been matched by the biggest increase in VE (the National Trust's visitor satisfaction score) experienced for any National Trust property, from 32% in 2011-2012, to 64% in 2012-2013 (with the score at 66% for 2013-2014) [source 3]. In addition, the guidebook (authored by Esmonde Cleary and providing a contextualisation and digest of the research presented in greater detail in the History Press book) registered onsite sales of 2065 in the period from April 2012 – July 2013. Renewed interest in the site following the re-opening also resulted in an increase in volunteers at the site over the same time period from 5 to 46 (collectively contributing a total of 5514 hours). Feedback from volunteers revealed that most were attracted to working at Chedworth because of the re-interpretation and presentation [source 3].

In summary, Esmonde Cleary's research into Chedworth Roman villa has had an impact upon the ideas and methods of those professionals working on the redesign and development of the site, by providing them with accurate and relevant historical input. The wider impact of this is upon National Trust policy, and will be upon future developments within the National Trust, where academic research will now form a key element of design and presentation. Visitor numbers, guidebook sales and satisfaction ratings since the reopening of Chedworth with the new content and presentation, provide clear indication that tourism has also been stimulated and the visitor experience has improved as a result of Esmonde Cleary's involvement.

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

- [1] Factual statement provided by Curator (Gloucestershire & Bath), The National Trust
- [2] Esmonde Cleary, S. 2012. *Chedworth Roman Villa*. Swindon: National Trust (available on request)
- [3] Factual statement provided by Operations Manager (Chedworth Roman Villa), The National Trust, including visitor numbers, visitor satisfaction and volunteer engagement feedback.