

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

<b>Institution:</b> University of York
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 30, History
<b>Title of case study:</b> Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The History Department's Centre for the Study of Christianity and Culture (CSCC) employed its research expertise in religious history to improve the understanding and sustainability of historic churches and cathedrals. These together form England's largest single 'estate' of built heritage with over 11 million visitors each year. From 2008 the Centre developed an extensive programme of national partnerships, which have led to significant and wide-reaching impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) creating new aids to help visitors engage with sacred sites</li> <li>(ii) encouraging tourism and enhancing access to these national and international heritage sites for people from all cultural and faith backgrounds</li> <li>(iii) delivering professional development activities for clergy, lay leaders, church architects, diocesan staff, heritage staff and volunteers</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The Centre synthesises and utilises research findings across the History Department's internationally recognized research expertise in religious history. It also provides an interdisciplinary forum for research collaboration that explores the interface between history, theology, and spirituality, and examines and interprets the built fabric, the cultural, social and economic contexts of churches and other religious buildings, and how these have interacted and changed over time. In particular, its impact programme has been underpinned by research in the following areas:</p> <p><b>Anglo-Saxon Saints and Sacred Sites:</b> Cubitt's (Professor) research has provided a new focus on the history of Anglo-Saxon spirituality. Her internationally recognized work (<b>Bi</b>) on saints' cults in Anglo-Saxon England has demonstrated the centrality of these cults in early medieval society and traced their role in the establishment of sites of devotion in locations ranging from relatively small churches to cathedrals. By placing him in a continental European context, she has significantly revised (<b>B ii</b>) St Wilfrid's role in the Anglo-Saxon church and enabled a fuller assessment of his career and influence. This revision has shaped CSCC's work with Ripon Cathedral. Her research has revealed the key role of place and landscape features, such as holy wells, in the development of Anglo-Saxon sacred sites, and this provided the foundation and the grounding for CSCC interpretation schemes.</p> <p><b>Pilgrimage:</b> Dyas (<b>C</b>) (Senior Research Fellow) is a pioneer in the field of pilgrimage studies, which employs historical approaches to reinterpret and encourage engagement with sacred sites today. Setting up a dialogue between contemporary theological concerns and detailed research into medieval practice and devotional writings, she has developed an innovative interdisciplinary approach redefining the field. Integrating historical research with findings from theology, sociology, psychology and social anthropology, she has revealed the explicit and implicit parallels between the pilgrim's journeys to sacred sites and the individual's journey through life. In consequence, her research sheds new light on the continuing importance of place, ritual and sensory experience for individuals and communities today.</p> <p><b>York's Civic and Religious Life:</b> The work of Rees Jones (<b>D, E</b>) (Lecturer, then Senior Lecturer), Cross (<b>Ai, ii</b>) (Professor until 2000, then Emeritus) and Sheils (<b>G</b>) (Professor) has revealed the wide-reaching role of religion in shaping the civic structures and communities of York from the eleventh to the sixteenth century. Of particular importance is Rees Jones's work, culminating in a major OUP monograph, (<b>E</b>) which has demonstrated the extent to which numerous religious institutions in the city interacted with and influenced the development and enactment of civic life, stressing the relationship between parishes and city governance. This book transforms our understanding of the social, economic and political structures of one of Europe's major ecclesiastical centres. Cross's deep archival research into York's clerical community has shown the gradual and contested emergence of a Reformed city over the long sixteenth century. Royle (<b>F</b>)</p>

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

(Professor to 2009) and Sheils (**G**) have demonstrated the extent to which post-Reformation York must be understood as a multi-confessional city. In contrast to an older historiographical tradition, this research contributes to the growing literature on Europe that stresses local confessional co-existence and 'everyday ecumenism'.

**3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

- (**A**) i Claire Cross, 'Realising a Utopian dream: the transformation of the clergy in the diocese of York, 1500–1630' in R. Horrox and Sarah Rees Jones eds. *Pragmatic Utopias, Ideals and Communities, 1200–1630* (Cambridge, 2002).  
 ii *eadem.*, 'A Clerical Affray in Petergate in 1540' in D. M. Smith ed., *The Church in Medieval York*, Borthwick Institute Texts and Calendars, 24 (1999).  
 (**B**) i. Catherine Cubitt, 'Universal and Local Saints in Anglo-Saxon England' in A. Thacker and R. Sharpe eds., *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*. (Oxford, 2002).##  
 ii. *eadem.*, 'St Wilfrid: A Man for his Times', in Nick Higham ed., *Wilfrid: Abbot, Bishop, Saint. Papers from the 1300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conferences*, (Donington, 2013). ###  
 (**C**) Dee Dyas, 'Medieval Patterns of Pilgrimage: A Mirror for Today?' in Craig Bartholomew and Fred Hughes eds, *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage* (Ashgate, 2004), 92-109.  
 (**D**) Sarah Rees Jones, 'York's Civic Administration, 1354-1461', in Rees Jones ed., *The Government of Medieval York*, (Borthwick Studies in History, 3, 1997), 108-140.#  
 (**E**) *eadem.*, *York: the making of a city 1086-1350* (Oxford, 2013).###  
 (**F**) Edward Royle, 'From Gothic Church to Greek Temple: religion in York, c. 1740-1840', in M. Hallett and J. Rendall, eds. *Eighteenth-Century York: culture, space and society*. Borthwick Texts and Calendars, 30 (2003).##  
 (**G**) W. J. Sheils, "'Getting on" and "Getting along" in Parish and Town: English Catholics and their Neighbours' in B Kaplan, R Moore, H van Neiroop, & J Pollman eds, *Catholic Communities in Protestant States: Britain and the Netherlands 1580-1720* (Manchester, 2009).

# = RAE 2001 (York scored 5); ## = RAE 2008 95% of York's submissions were 2\* or above; ### = Submitted to REF2.

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

Historical research at York into place and pilgrimage has been used by CSCC for its interpretation work. This involves working with the people managing the sites to devise ways of presenting churches and cathedrals, using a variety tools, such as touch screen displays, websites, and most innovatively and commonly mobile apps for phones and i-pads. This also involves facilitating meetings with local stakeholders and local history groups to inform them about current historical research and the ways it has changed our understanding of church and community. The digital resources have also provided the foundation for an entirely new package of professional development for clergy and the custodians of these churches. The impacts of this work can be summarized under three headings:

**1. Creating new aids to help visitors engage with sacred sites:**

- a. The work of Dyas and Cubitt has helped to reshape heritage interpretation. Dyas's research on the history of pilgrimage is helping those managing churches to recognise the continuing importance of 'place' and of sensory experience in both traditional and new 'secular' forms of spirituality. In a growing number of cathedrals and historic parish churches, she has devised pilgrim trails (using mobile app technology and other interpretation tools) to help visitors understand the pilgrim experience of the past and explore the significance of 'place' today. For example, pilgrimage was chosen by Worcester Cathedral as the central theme of their 2012-2013 CSCC-led interpretation scheme:  
<http://www.christianityandculture.org.uk/partnerships/worcester-cathedral/>; (**S3**).

Cubitt's outputs on the Anglo-Saxon church have fed directly into 3 CSCC-led history/interpretation projects:

- Her research identifying the significance of place and landscape features, such as holy wells, in

## Impact case study (REF3b)

the development of Anglo-Saxon sacred sites is helping to shape the Berkswell ('Beorces well') parish project in Warwickshire. This community-led local history project links Berkswell parish church and the wider local community, and is a scheme which has led to the parish becoming an exemplar of research-based interpretation for scholars and other communities (**S10**).

- Her work (**Bi**) on saints' cults in Anglo-Saxon England, demonstrating the centrality of these cults in early medieval society and tracing their role in the establishment of sacred sites, has been used to provide a new focus on Anglo-Saxon spirituality in the interpretation programmes created for Winchester and Worcester Cathedrals - a complete interpretation scheme for the latter is currently underway (2012-15) (**S3**).
  - Her most recent work on St Wilfrid (**B ii**) has significantly revised assessment of his role in the Anglo-Saxon church. This has shaped the concept and content of the interpretation project, using touch-screen and mobile app technology, at Ripon Cathedral (2013) (**S11**).
- b. Fusing research generated by eleven members of the History Department, visual material and external contributions, with interactive technology, CSCC produced a 1 million word DVD-ROM, *The English Parish Church through the Centuries* (2010). This highly flexible resource made historical research available to new audiences, not only were 3000 copies distributed, but it was adopted by the British Museum as a key resource for its 2011 *Treasures of Heaven* Exhibition (visited by 75,000 people). Hailed by the Archbishop of York as 'a brilliant resource for parishes, churches and schools ... a treasure chest of information which will help to inspire many to be much more creative about the way we use our church buildings' (**S12**), and as 'a tool to revolutionize our understanding and enjoyment of churches' by the Chair of The Churches Conservation Trust (**S13**), it has had a demonstrable impact within church communities.

The DVD-ROM also exemplifies the impact that our research has had in enhancing visitors' experience of sacred space and in continuing professional development, as set out below:

## 2. Encouraging tourism and enhanced access to national and international heritage sites for people from all cultural and faith backgrounds:

Using the historical analyses of Cross, Sheils and Royle, which revealed the multi-confessional nature of post-Reformation religious life and culture in York, CSCC developed a ground-breaking cross-denominational mobile app for 12 York City Centre Churches (2012-13). (**S2**). To date, this has led to the establishment of 20 partnership projects with churches and cathedrals which are working to improve the way visitors navigate and engage with these spaces. These have often involved the development of new mobile apps based upon historical research, including Holy Trinity, Stratford on Avon (200,000 visitors p.a.), Coventry Cathedral (330,000), Norwich (140,000), Ripon (93,000) and Winchester (110,000) (2013) (**S4**). The Stratford App and its rationale were the subject of a Radio 4 interview, contributing to public discourse about how visitors, especially the 16-25 year age group, engage with cultural heritage and religious buildings. These new approaches have achieved a step-change in the way the sites engage with visitors. The Dean of Worcester writes:

'Working with Christianity and Culture has transformed the way the Cathedral understands its engagement with visitors, particularly through exploring the relevance of pilgrimage past and present and thus creating new ways to help them relate to this sacred site.'

Furthermore, the Centre's combination of research and digital resources has enabled all age groups to engage with church buildings and has enabled churches better to support volunteer guides and to provide material even when buildings are not staffed (**S1-3;S6-7**). *The Parish Church* DVD-ROM led to a new free downloadable online resource for primary schools to assist school teachers to use local churches as a key resource in teaching History and RE (**S8**).

### 3. Delivering professional development activities:

The launch by the Archbishop of Canterbury of *The Parish Church* DVD in 2010 and its dissemination broadened the reach of the Centre's activities to the professional arena of church and heritage staff, diocesan specialists, church architects, and the volunteers who care for the Church of England's 12,500 Grade 1 and 2\* listed buildings.

At the request of English Heritage (EH) and the Church of England, the Centre created a new training partnership focusing on CPD for staff and volunteers charged with conserving, maintaining, using and opening up churches (**S4**). With EH funding, the Centre developed a model for training days across the country: pilot days in York (2012) and Newcastle and Durham dioceses (2013) were attended by 121 church leaders, architects and heritage staff (**S9**); further events are planned for Lichfield and Gloucester dioceses. Delegate responses include: 'The training and tools developed by CSCC have really changed the way we as a church are discussing our future, opening us up to new ways of thinking about our building and planning what to do next' (Revd Rachel Hirst, Vicar, St Peter's Church, Norton).

This programme is supported by a new CSCC designed online tool (also funded by EH) which helps churches explore their history, make decisions for the future and create appropriate re-ordering schemes. This tool has led to a new collaboration with the Church of England which will transform the capacity of churches to work with statutory bodies for more positive and cost-effective outcomes which enhance provision for local communities (**S5; S6**). The combination of increased historical understanding, new tools and issue-focused training has significantly altered attitudes and behaviour among staff and volunteers who maintain and use churches (**S6; S7; S9**). The Centre is also working with the Church of England to shape the new national clergy training programme. Delivering deeper understanding of the historically changing structure and uses of churches has challenged conventional views of restricted functionality. It has opened congregations to the possibility and acceptability of using church property in creative ways to enrich local community life (**S5; S6; S9**). This has clear economic benefits through increasing sustainability of buildings and communities in both rural and urban contexts.

The Department's research has thus helped to generate new ways of looking at religious relevance by situating churches in clear relationship to their social, economic and cultural contexts (**S1**). In the words of the Archdeacon of Charing Cross, 'Congregations and even clergy often do not realise that their churches have undergone significant change and have often had multiple uses in the past; religious and community/tourist uses of churches are thus frequently seen as conflicting priorities. Christianity and Culture's resources and focused training events are invaluable in helping clergy, members of congregations and local communities to transform their understanding of how their church building has evolved and thus respond more effectively to present challenges' (**S7**).

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

Sources include surveys using a specially-designed methodology producing metrics for evaluation carried out by Prof Helen Petrie (Computer Science) and the Archaeology Department.

S1. Data collected using Petrie methodology 2012, 2013. Responses from clergy, managers, trustees, volunteers & visitors including school groups; Holy Trinity Goodramgate volunteer, 2013).

S2. York City Centre Churches App data (evidence from clergy, congregations, visitors); Archaeology MA project 2013.

S3. Pilgrim trail feedback (Coventry Cathedral, Worcester Cathedral, Stratford on Avon).

S4. Diana Evans (Head of Places of Worship Advice, English Heritage).

S5. Nigel Walter, Church Architect, Church Build website. <http://archangelic.co.uk/>

S6. Churches Tourism Association.

S7. The Ven. W. M. Jacobs, Archdeacon of Charing Cross.

S8. Online 'Visiting Churches' Schools Pack feedback.

S9. Pilot diocesan training days feedback.

S10. Berkswell Parish feedback (Vicar, local history group, Warwick University Parish Network).

S11. Canon Professor Joyce Hill on Ripon cathedral project

S12. Quote from Archbishop of York <http://www.christianityandculture.org.uk/products/epc>

S13. Quote from Chair of the Churches Conservation Trust

<http://www.christianityandculture.org.uk/products/epc>