

Institution: University of Nottingham
Unit of Assessment: 30
Title of case study: England's Past for Everyone Derbyshire: Co-producing local histories with local communities
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Through accessible local history resources co-produced by academics and community volunteers, Riden has helped to open up previously academic-focused research to new, local audiences. He has empowered amateur historians through new research skills to take an active role in documenting and thereby conserving their communities' histories (this has included volunteers publishing their own research). He has contributed to an improved quality of visitor experience at a local heritage organisation through providing new knowledge and confidence to volunteer guides. Through translating the co-produced resources for use in primary and secondary schools, he has given children new research skills which they have then used to develop new understanding of their community's history.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The Victoria County History (VCH) project is a long-term local history research project of international standing, established in 1899 and since 1933 directed by the Institute of Historical Research at London University. Professor John Beckett (Nottingham, 2009, Professor of English Regional History) was Director of the VCH, 2005-10. VCH provides an encyclopedic record of England's places and people from earliest times to the present day, operating on a confederal basis, with county editors, on the teaching and research staff of a university History department in the region in which they work, responsible for preparing volumes for editing and publication centrally. Within every volume, the history of each county is sub-divided into parishes and provides a chronological historical narrative from the earliest recorded settlement to the present day. VCH adheres to the highest academic and intellectual standards, drawing on extensive archival and published sources, as well as archaeological data and oral testimony. It employs full academic apparatus.</p> <p>Riden (Nottingham, 2005) coordinated the research for volume 3 of VCH, Derbyshire, which considers four parishes in the Bolsover area. Following the VCH approach, Riden brought together archival and published sources covering landownership, economic history, social history, religious history, and local government, with material including records in central custody as well as local record offices. The research covers all aspects of the history of the community from the earliest evidence of human settlement to the present day. Research insights and findings are summarised here for the Hardwick volume (with a similar range of insights arising from the research into each of the other parishes). The research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improved the factual accuracy of what is known of Bess of Hardwick's life (1521-1608), removing a lot of traditional myths and legends which popular biographers have repeated about her; • identified more clearly how the estate centred in Hardwick was built up in her lifetime and that of her son William, the 1st earl of Devonshire (1551-1626); • worked out how the estate was administered from the late 16th century until the early 20th; • established how far Hardwick Hall was used as a family home in that period and how far it was left empty once the family moved to live at Chatsworth; • looked at the impact of the estate on the local community in terms of putting money collected in rents from the estate back into the community by buying goods and services and paying wages; • and looked at the response of a traditional rural estate to the impact of large-scale coalmining and the growth of population in the district in the second half of the 19th century. <p>In 2004 London University received a large award from the Heritage Lottery Fund to enable VCH to make its work more widely available through VCH's public engagement sister project (England's Past for Everyone [EPE]). The outcomes of this project were a series of popular paperbacks (EPE), a website and work with schools. In Derbyshire two volumes were published, one on</p>

Bolsover: castle, town and colliery (3.1) and the other on *Hardwick: a great house and its estate* (3.2). Riden and a colleague (a retired senior county archivist) who helps with VCH on a voluntary basis undertook additional research work as part of the EPE project to produce a set of publications that combine the high standards of traditional VCH research with a lighter prose style, more explanation of technicalities, and a large number of illustrations. For this case study, these publications have dual status: as academic publications which demonstrate the sound intellectual underpinning of the research undertaken for the EPE project (referenced in section 3), and as a set of published outputs which demonstrate the facilitation of community interest in, and the co-production of resources to support, local history (in which capacity they are discussed in section 4).

3. References to the research

3.1. Philip Riden and Dudley Fowkes, *Bolsover: castle, town and colliery* (Phillimore for the University of London, 208 pp., 2008) ISBN 9781860774843. Available on request.

3.2. Philip Riden and Dudley Fowkes, *Hardwick: a great house and its estate* (Phillimore for the University of London, 208 pp., 2009) ISBN 9781860775444. Available on request.

3.3. P. Riden, ed., *Derbyshire Victoria County History Handbook* (Derbyshire Record Society, Occasional Paper no. 9 of 2012, 124 pp. 2012) ISBN 978-0-946324-35-4 Available on request.

3.4. P. Riden and D. Fowkes, *Victoria County History: Derbyshire, III: Bolsover and adjoining parishes* (Boydell for University of London, 2013), ISBN: 978-1-904356-43 209 xvi + 209 pp., 71 illus. Available on request.

Indicators of research quality

The items listed above were prepared according to the well-established rules and robust quality assurance procedures of the VCH series. They were refereed externally before being accepted for the series.

4. Details of the impact

Creating accessible cultural capital to enrich the lives of local audiences in Derbyshire

Two volumes co-produced by Riden and groups of volunteer local historians in Derbyshire as part of the EPE initiative broke new ground in their scope by providing authoritative but accessible accounts of the mining community of Bolsover and the Hardwick estates of the Dukes of Devonshire (3.1 & 3.2). The books reflect **new knowledge and analysis and represent a contribution to the cultural capital of the area**. No general history of Bolsover had appeared since the 1890s and, although much has been written about Hardwick Hall, there had hitherto been no history of the parishes on the estate. The two proved highly-popular locally: A total print-run of 1,016 copies of the Bolsover book and 1,568 copies of the Hardwick Hall book were produced, figures which the publishers consider to be 'excellent', making the titles amongst the best sellers in the EPE series, with the publishers 'keen for reprints to be made'. (5.1) The figures demonstrate a **widening of the audience-base for research that has previously only attracted scholarly audiences**. The books reached a more generalist audience than local history publications often do through their availability in local supermarkets and newsagents. The publishers view is that the books, being linked directly to well-known historical places, reached a wide audience and were purchased sometimes in lieu of more traditional guidebooks, allowing Riden's scholarly work to enrich both the tourist experience at Bolsover and Hardwick (see below), whilst also providing members of the local community with scholarly information about their locality and its history in a readable format. The public who engaged with the material found it enriching: 'Discovering the past leads to greater understanding of the present and is a life enhancing experience. **Knowing about the lives of those who lived in our town is enriching for us, who live here now**'. (5.2)

Transforming the skills base of local historians

As part of the research and writing process that underpinned these publications, the volunteer communities developed **new skills and competencies**. For some participants this has been **transformative**, giving them the skills and confidence to go on to lead their own local history

groups, and in two cases, to publish their own research. At regular meetings (which began in 2006 and continued into 2009), volunteers received skills training in the use of source materials, including census enumerators' books, probate records and glebe terriers, designed to be transformative in terms of their own research competencies and understanding. One volunteer commented, "My involvement with the VCH and EPE has enabled me to acquire a number of **transferrable skills, useful to me both as an amateur local historian and in other spheres**". Another said that media training he had received through the EPE project 'proved extremely useful with VCH but also included transferrable skills used in both my local history interest and at work...My involvement with VCH has challenged me to adopt different writing styles for different audiences'. He added that the support he had received during his participation in the project had **given him the skills and confidence to publish his own material**. On the basis of her participation in the project, another volunteer compiled an illustrated book 'Challenge and Change in Bolsover 1983-2008' (2009), and accompanying CD, which was made publicly available through Chesterfield Library. Although listed as references in section 3, these books represent part of the outcomes and impact of the EPE initiative too, reflecting grass roots community involvement in the co-production of historical knowledge. The skills developed by the volunteers who participated transformed their ability to undertake and manage their own research, and to communicate it to new audiences. (5.2)

Contributing resources to local libraries to further their local history education work

The value of this work to the libraries involved is measured through the increased uptake of library resources. A Local Studies Librarian for Derbyshire County Council comments: "Through these meetings the volunteers have acquired research skills and also **gained extensive knowledge of source material, several of the volunteers having returned to the library inspired to use these skills in furthering their own research**. She also attests to the impact of the research on the richness of the library's own resources: 'Many of the project's research notes, including notes from other archives and repositories, are stored at Chesterfield Library and have been **consulted by other library users, thus providing a useful resource to the wider public**. The Hardwick and Bolsover volumes are also a valuable addition to library stock throughout the county, being authoritative, accessible, and attractively presented.'(5.3)

Enhancing the quality of the tourist experience at two heritage venues

Riden was invited to give talks to volunteers at both Hardwick Hall and Chatsworth which ultimately improved the quality of the visitor experience. Through a series of talks, Riden provided insights and findings from his research that helped to **improve the accuracy and contribute to the richness of the information they shared with visitors**. A volunteer leader from Hardwick who engaged Riden to undertake one such talks attests to his success in delivering reliable and sound research that effectively allowed volunteers who attended to confidently pass on the new knowledge they gained to the visitors (5.4) thus improving the quality and richness of the visitor experience. Other talks based at venues including Derby and Chesterfield Libraries, the Scarsdale Local History Fair and Chatsworth House and Hardwick Hall and Bolsover (based on the EPE publications [3.1-3.4]) have further **engaged local audiences with their regional history**.

Contributing to local children's knowledge about, and skills for researching, their community's history

Research material from EPE publications was translated into information packs for KS 2 & 3 teachers by the education consultant of Derbyshire County Council working closely with a local History Advanced Skills Teacher in 2008-2009. The education consultant said "The project has...**supported the development of knowledge and skills....It will promote better partnerships between schools and with other partners such as the library and archives, as well as historical organisations/ sites.**"(5.5) Pupils from both Bolsover Secondary School and New Bolsover Primary School were involved in the project which explored the life of people in New Bolsover mining community in the 1900s through visits to the National Coal Mining Museum and census research sessions with support from their local librarian. Through IT training from Derbyshire County Council, the pupils developed their own webpages with information about the local history they had learned through this project, developing resources which are available for future use by the schools and Derbyshire County Council. (5.6)

Impact case study (REF3b)

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Factual statement from Publications Manager at Victoria County History
2. Feedback from volunteers (available on file)
3. Factual statement from Local Studies Librarian, Chesterfield Library (available on file)
4. Factual statement from Volunteer Co-ordinator at Hardwick Hall
5. Quote from education consultant at <http://www.englandspastforeveryone.org.uk/schools/projects/bolsover-1901-derbyshire?page=3>
6. Project evaluation (available on file)