

Impact case study template (REF3b)

Title of case study: Using Medieval Village Research to Improve the Skills and Aspirations of Secondary School Students and Disadvantaged Adults

1. Summary of the impact

The Higher Education Field Academy (HEFA) is a research-led initiative in which thousands of secondary school students (mostly aged 13–15) from groups with low levels of progression to university education acquire new transferrable skills and measurably raised levels of personal confidence and educational aspirations. These impacts are achieved through a tailored scheme of work which involves them in investigating the origins and development of English villages using archaeological methods. The scheme has also benefited other communities, including disadvantaged adults with autistic spectrum conditions, and generated a new teaching module in GCSE History.

2. Underpinning research

Dr Carena Lewis joined the University of Cambridge in 2004, and is employed as a Senior Research Associate. Her prior research (with the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England from 1985–2000, and on secondment to the University of Birmingham from 1992–1994) had focused on the development of the medieval English settlement pattern. She studied factors affecting the abandonment of so-called deserted medieval villages and the origins of settlement nucleation, publishing (among other works) *Village Hamlet and Field* (Manchester University Press 1997), a standard textbook on the subject. After then focusing on media archaeology (with *Time Team*, a programme she co-presented from its inception until 2005), her goal on starting a new initiative at Cambridge was to explore the different developmental trajectories of non-deserted medieval settlements (Lewis 2007). This was a previously neglected topic (Jones and Lewis 2012) which potentially encompasses tens of thousands of sites across the UK, and many more beyond. The inhabited nature of such places, and the need to work at a large scale, made it essential to work with local communities. The research thus provided both an opportunity and a need to develop new approaches to large-scale research-led public archaeology, including identifiable and measurable positive impacts for participants.

Dr Lewis' resulting vision has taken its most developed form in HEFA, which since 2005 has combined the goals of providing new insights into the origins and development of English settlements with boosting the skills and aspirations of school pupils and enhancing the role of archaeology in secondary education. Her research has become a model of good practice, recognized, for example, by an honorary degree from the University of East Anglia (in 2007), shortlisting for the Council for British Archaeology's Marsh Archaeology Award (in 2009), peer-reviewed funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) under the *Connected Communities* thematic call (in 2011 and 2012) and an invitation to serve on the Advisory Group of the AHRC thematic call *Care for the Future: Thinking Forward through the Past*.

Dr Lewis' HEFA-linked research has resulted in c. 1400 test-pit excavations in currently occupied rural settlements, making it the largest such project ever undertaken. It has shown the archaeological potential of these locations to be very high with tens of thousands of pot sherds recovered from known contexts across more than 40 parishes in 10 counties, focusing in particular on eastern England. The data have enabled Dr Lewis to reconstruct dozens of

settlement histories showing meaningful patterns of growth and contraction alongside regional variation. Her results are now sufficient to reconstruct the effects of major Europe-wide events and processes such as the high medieval economic boom (Lewis 2010) and the Black Death (Lewis 2013). Using pottery as a proxy for human activity, she has revealed demographic and economic expansion across eastern England of 300% or more between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, and contraction of c. 50% in the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.

3. References to the research (in alphabetical/chronological order)

Key Research Outputs:

1. Jones, R. and Lewis, C. 2012. The Midlands: Medieval settlements and landscapes. In Christie, N. and Stamper, P. (eds), *Medieval Rural Settlement: Britain and Ireland, AD 800–1600*. Oxford: Windgather Press, 186–205. ISBN 9781905119424
2. Lewis, C. 2007. New avenues for the investigation of currently occupied medieval rural settlement: Preliminary observations from the Higher Education Field Academy. *Medieval Archaeology* 51: 133–164. INT1* category peer-reviewed journal on the European Reference Index for the Humanities. DOI: 10.1179/174581707x224697
3. Lewis, C. 2010. Exploring black holes: Recent investigations in currently occupied rural settlements in eastern England. In Higham, N.J. and Ryan, M.J. (eds), *Landscape Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 83–106. ISBN: 9781843835820
4. Lewis, C. 2013. *Disaster recovery: Reconstructing the impact of the Black Death on medieval villages*. 12 January 2013. [lecture] Leicester, UK: Society for Historical Archaeology Annual Conference.

Research Grants:

1. Lewis, C. 'Cambridge Collaborations for Community Heritage', Arts and Humanities Research Council Development Grant (AH/J013536/1), 2012, £24,933 FEC.
2. Lewis, C. 'Cambridge Community Heritage Phase Two', Arts and Humanities Research Council Follow-on Fund Grant (AH/K007858/1), 2013, £88,578 FEC.

*INT1 - International publication with high visibility and influence among researchers in the various research domains in different countries, regularly cited all over the world.

4. Details of the impact

Between 2008 and 2013, 77 HEFAs, devised and run by Dr Lewis, have raised academic aspirations and developed transferrable skills in thousands of young people. In each HEFA, around 40 pupils complete their own test-pit excavation in mentored, mixed-school teams over two days before spending a third day at the University of Cambridge analysing their results and learning about university. Pupils each subsequently write a unique formal report on their excavation which is assessed and returned to them with feedback.

HEFA is targeted at secondary school pupils (mostly aged 13–15) in state education who need encouragement in order to fulfil their educational potential. Most pupils are from lower socio-economic groups; and/or from families with little or no university experience; and/or attend schools which send few pupils to university; and/or where pupils fail to aim appropriately high or wide when applying to university. HEFA 2008–2013 is not intended to recruit students

specifically to archaeology HE courses, nor specifically to Cambridge, but to develop wider learning skills and aspirations, especially in students previously less likely to attend any university. The focus on the archaeology of villages – places familiar and accessible to participants – is crucial to making the educational aims of the programme work and Dr Lewis' career combining academic research and media archaeology has opened unique avenues for engaging the young.

Since 2008, c. 9000 HEFA learning days have been provided to c. 3000 pupils from c. 200 schools. Pupils' confidence and knowledge have been boosted and their aspirations raised through making new discoveries, learning new skills, learning about university life and assimilating detailed feedback on their practical and written work. The skills learned on HEFA have been formally elicited as follows: (1) Data collection, analysis and evaluation; (2) Learning and thinking (including verbal communication, structured working, creative thinking, reflective learning, team working, effort and persistence); (3) Report writing (including report structuring and data presentation, writing skills and IT skills); (4) Citizenship (including working within local communities, contributing to community knowledge, investigating local environments and conserving local heritage).

HEFA's impact on pupils is assiduously monitored: (1) Written feedback is collected before and after each HEFA from pupils and school staff; (2) Formative and summative assessment of pupils' performance uses rigorous and objective frameworks developed by Dr Lewis in collaboration with assessment professionals and published in the *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*; (3) Pupils self-assess their learning and thinking skills; (4) Pupils' written reports are trawled for comments about their HEFA experience; (5) Individual reports are returned to each pupil detailing and explaining their achievements to use when preparing CVs and personal UCAS statements; (6) Pupils' onward educational pathways are tracked for at least 2 years to assess longer-term impacts.

More impact data on HEFA are available than can be presented here, but highlights are that after completing HEFA, c. 80% of all pupils report raised performance in transferable skills and a similar percentage report raised academic aspirations. 80–90% of all participants rate HEFA as excellent or good and nearly 90% of participants plan to attend university (an increase of between 30% and 60% compared to beforehand in any given year); HEFA has been particularly effective at engaging boys, with a 50/50 gender balance, unlike other Aimhigher summer schools which often attracted many more girls than boys (Contact 1). Teaching staff are equally enthusiastic, which leads schools to sustain their involvement (Contact 2). Two have produced reports on the impact of HEFA on their students (e.g. '*Fakenham High School and College: Higher Education Field Academy 2012 Feedback/Impact Summary*'). The impact of the HEFA programme is also evident in its financial support from organizations including The European Social Fund (2008–2009), Aimhigher (2008–2011), HEFCE (2009–2010) and English Heritage (2008–2011).

Dr Lewis' HEFA-related research has also impacted on teaching *within* schools. In consultation with exam boards and history teachers she developed a new module for GCSE History (usable within all three English exam boards) enabling pupils to study a historic settlement near to their school for the *History Around Us* module of SHP (School History Project) GCSE. This entails in-class and outdoor learning, followed by a written assessment under exam conditions, which currently accounts for c. 25% of the total GCSE mark. The new module has been successfully completed by 244 pupils. Feedback shows that student "enjoyment of their study of history has been increased", while marking shows that "across all attainment levels, student's Controlled Assessment was their highest scoring unit within the GCSE" (Contact 3).

The HEFA model is also being expanded beyond schools. Collaboration with Cambridgeshire charity Red2Green in 2012, for example, has enabled adults disadvantaged by autistic spectrum conditions to develop new skills while working in mixed groups designed to encourage improved community integration. The success of HEFA has enabled Dr Lewis to expand her commitment to involving the public in medieval archaeological research to other contexts via her Access Cambridge Archaeology (ACA) archaeological outreach unit (e.g. the Heritage Lottery funded *Managing a Masterpiece* project regarding the heritage of the Stour Valley) which is helping residents of many rural settlements enrich their communities by exploring the past together (Contact 4).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (in alphabetical/chronological order)

1. Catling, C. 2010. Test pits and teaching. *Current Archaeology* 239: 30–35. Summary available at: <<http://www.archaeology.co.uk/issues/ca-239.htm>> [Accessed 28 September 2013].
2. HEFA feedback data including original hard copy of all returns from participating pupils and accompanying staff are held at the University of Cambridge.
3. Johnson, M. and Lewis, C. 2013. 'Can you dig it?' Developing an approach to validly assessing diverse skills in an archaeological context. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training* 65(2): 175–192. DOI: 10.1080/13636820.2012.755212
4. Muir, K. 2012. *Digging up Swaffham Bulbeck – A Report on the Social Outcomes of a Community Excavation* [report]. Cambridge: Red2Green.
5. Stone, J. 2013. *Fakenham High School and College: Higher Education Field Academy (HEFA) 2012 Feedback/Impact Summary* [report]. Cambridge: HEFA, University of Cambridge, Beacon School.

Testimonials:

1. Contact 1: Aimhigher Eastern Region Manager (2004–2011), Aimhigher
2. Contact 2: Head of History, Thomas Gainsborough School, Great Cornard.
3. Contact 3: Curriculum Area Leader: Humanities, Mildenhall College Academy, Mildenhall.
4. Contact 4: Scheme Manager, *Managing a Masterpiece* project, Ipswich.