

Institution: Swansea University
Unit of Assessment: 30 - History

a. Context

Historians at Swansea use their research to help communities and individuals understand and benefit from their pasts. We do this by building sustainable links with a range of partners: we work with **print and broadcast media** and **heritage organisations** to enhance public understanding of the past; with **education policy makers** on the design of school curricula; with **charities and community groups** on processes of commemoration and celebration; and with **military and governmental agencies** to preserve and enhance cultural heritage. The devolved political context in which we operate in Wales has created particular opportunities for historians in our Richard Burton Centre for the Study of Wales, our Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Research and our Research Group for Health, History and Culture, to influence public debate through participation in government advisory groups, and to reach large audiences through national broadcasting channels and major cultural festivals. Meanwhile, historians in our Conflict and Commemoration Group provide specialist advice to international military strategists, victims' organizations and commemoration committees. **By prioritising collaboration with external agencies as one of our key research strategies, impact is embedded at the heart of what we do.**

b. Approach to impact

Historians at Swansea have a distinguished record of 'third mission' activity which pre-dates 2008. From 1961 they played a key role in the Lower Swansea Valley Project, a regeneration initiative that transformed the landscape of one of Britain's most blighted post-industrial zones. In the 1970s they led the creation of the South Wales Miners' Library to save the physical and intellectual heritage of the coal industry. Our response to the REF impact agenda thus builds on **a long-standing belief in the potential of historical research to enrich lives.**

Impact begins with **communication of research findings to shape public understanding of the past.** Swansea historians have made expert contributions to key Radio 4 programmes (*Today, Making History, In Our Time*) and our research has also driven the content and development of flagship programming such as *The Story of Wales* (BBC1W & BBC4), which attracted record audiences and is being utilised in schools. Our research also **influences public debates and discourses.** Johnes' work on the history of referenda was a front-page news item during the 2011 Welsh Assembly referendum campaign, while his research on Thatcherism in Wales was central to coverage of Thatcher's legacy on BBC Wales and in the *Western Mail*, Wales's national newspaper. Some of our recent work has **reached global audiences.** Williams' *Richard Burton Diaries* (Yale, 2012), which presents new insights into the actor's life, attracted television and print coverage in 21 countries, reaching a likely combined audience of 100 million.

Research impacts require enduring relationships and Swansea has led the drive for a more powerful historical forum in Wales with which public bodies can engage. The formation in 2009 of **History Research Wales**, an alliance of historians in Welsh universities, has strengthened our access to policy makers and annual cultural events. Its founder, Bowen, was invited on to the Welsh Government's Historic Environment Group, alongside representatives of the National Library, Cadw and the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments, Wales (RCAHMW), to advise ministers on strategic heritage priorities. It has also fostered major collaborations with the *Western Mail* and the Hay Literary Festival where Swansea historians, along with their colleagues from other Welsh institutions, now annually showcase their research. In Wales, where history is often subsumed in the UK context, such activities are important in **creating and interpreting popular historical capital.** In 2013 the Minister for Education acknowledged the importance of these activities in **'keeping the wider debate high up on the public agenda'**, especially *'at a time*

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when we as a government are also reviewing the teaching of Welsh History in our schools.' Swansea historians have had particular impact in debates over **education policy in Wales**. In 2012, James was part of a group of historians and education professionals who advised the Welsh Joint Education Committee on the content of their A-Level curriculum. In 2013, Johnes was invited to sit on a Welsh Government review of history teaching which recommended the establishment of a new national curriculum for Wales, to include Welsh History.

Much of our impact is sustained through **strong, reciprocal relationships with local government, heritage partners and community groups**. We provide advice to a range of such organisations on the historical content of their heritage work. Urban historian, Miskell, is a member of the City and County of Swansea's Blue Plaques Advisory Group, while Professor of Medieval History, Power, advises them on preserving historic monuments in the locality. We have provided advisors to the Imperial War Museum, the Cardiff Story and St Fagan's National History Museum, and the National Waterfront Museum has become a key venue for our impact activities hosting our Copper Day (2010), a football history exhibition (2012) and a Coalfield Disability History Roadshow (2013). In turn, we seek not just to develop one-way channels of communication but to **involve partners in the process of shaping impact**. Thus Turner consulted with a Disabled People's Panel which was instrumental in the decision to hold the disability roadshow. Johnes' £48k Lottery-funded project commemorating the centenary of Swansea City FC was delivered in consultation with the club's Supporters' Trust, providing a portfolio of community-based activities, including two museum exhibitions and an online archive attracting over 80,000 hits since its launch (Oct. 2011).

Our partnerships extend well beyond work with heritage organisations. Expert evidence by Rihll and Sagrillo on the interpretation of occult symbols in child abuse was hailed by Dyfed-Powys Police as integral to criminal convictions secured in 2011. In 2012-13, Poertner was part of a French Ministry of Finance funded network of historians and economists that advised the French government on the historic lessons of sovereign debt. **Members of our Conflict and Commemoration research group have undertaken important international advisory work**. Lewis' research on Austro-fascism led to her becoming one of two foreign representatives on a government commission on the Rehabilitation of the Victims of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg Regimes (1934-1938). Pollard's research on archaeological sites in conflict zones has been **presented to audiences of international military personnel and has informed the production of 'no-strike' lists** of historical sites in Syria for use by US and other western armed forces.

Our institution supports our impact activities through granting of leave, strategic deployment of finances and negotiation of formal agreements with external partners. Teaching relief at key periods, in particular, a two-year sabbatical (2010-12), enabled Bowen to pursue the Copper Project and History Research Wales initiatives. A £9.5k Research Initiatives Grant from **the Research Institute for Arts and Humanities (RIAH)** enabled Power to provide Cadw and Neath Port Talbot Borough Council with new historical evidence on the extent of the Neath Abbey estates. Three history PhD studentships with strong community-engagement elements, all relating to metal industries and their heritage, have been internally funded since 2009. Formal memoranda of understanding with RCAHMW and the National Waterfront Museum have cemented our partnership with these institutions in the process of channelling our research to inform public understanding. Their directors have been granted honorary positions at Swansea.

c. Strategy and plans

The partnerships, investments and initiatives developed since 2008 have embedded impact at the heart of our research activities. Our strategy for 2014-2020 takes this forward in two ways. First, we have devised a **programme of support for new and early career historians** at Swansea to identify their research impacts and develop links with potential partners to exploit this. This will be delivered through the system of one-to-one mentoring provided for all staff who join our

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department, and also through the **delivery of 'best-practice' workshops** by our experienced impact 'champions', to share ideas and provide advice to colleagues across the unit. Impact activities are built into workload planning and eligible for sabbatical applications and internal research funding. The second part of our strategy is to **build on and extend our existing strengths** and partnerships in our four key research areas of conflict commemoration, cultural protection, industrial heritage and public policy.

Our commitment to **conflict commemoration activities** will develop from 2013-16 through the work of James as CI on the HERA-funded project, *Militarized Cultural Encounters, 1792-1920*. This involves co-operation with the National Army Museum London, the *Militärhistorisches Museum Dresden*, the *Deutsches Historisches Museum Berlin* and the *Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv München*. Impacts will include a joint online-exhibition linked to the international bicentenaries and centenaries of the Napoleonic Wars and the First World War. From 2014, meanwhile, Pollard's work on the **protection of historic sites in conflict zones** enters a new phase aimed at providing training and advisory work for military partners to develop international cultural property protection protocols. Our contribution to **public discourses on disability** will be sustained by a major exhibition on coalfield disability at the National Waterfront Museum in 2015 funded by the Wellcome Trust as part of the 'Disability and Industrial Society' project. The project team will also engage with healthcare professionals on the **policy implications** of their research for service provision for disabled people via a Professional Workshop held in conjunction with Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board and Disability Wales in April 2014.

Exciting impact opportunities in our immediate vicinity include a new strand of activity in **industrial heritage**, led by Miskell, which commenced with a 'Steel Connections' workshop at Tata Steelworks, Port Talbot (Sept 2013) to explore the impact of industry on the steel communities of Wales. In partnership with Tata and its Port Talbot retired employees' association, our plans include the development of a heritage exhibition at the visitor centre on the steelworks site. The shortlisting of Swansea Bay for the UK's Capital of Culture and a major 2014 festival to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Dylan Thomas present further opportunities. Our research will form the centrepiece of an event with heritage partners on 'Swansea 1914'. In 2020, the University will celebrate its own centenary, as part of which Swansea historians will lead a new project to explore with the local community, the place of the University in the city, past and future.

d. Relationship to case studies

The three case studies that we have chosen to submit illustrate the transformative power of historical research and demonstrate the ways in which history at Swansea is having a deep and lasting impact on communities. **Turner's case-study on disability** shows how historical research can inform and empower minority groups and intervene in policy debates that affect them. **Bowen's case-study on copper** illustrates how historical research can be a major driver of planning and regeneration. **Williams' case-study on Richard Burton** shows the international reach of our research and its capacity to transform public perceptions of key cultural figures.

The case studies have each benefitted in different ways from public engagement activity, work with external partners and targeted university support. Strategic investment in the university's archive facilities was fundamental in facilitating the research on Burton and on the copper industry. The provision of sabbatical leave was used to help all three project leaders to achieve progress at key points. The collaborative planning ethos fostered by History Research Wales helped us test and identify potential impact case studies through an event on 'Maximising the Impact of Historical Research' (Glamorgan Archives, 2010). The success of these three projects has been a powerful driver for other Swansea historians to seek out new partnerships, funding streams and organisational support to deliver maximum public benefits from their research, thus advancing our unit's commitment to what has become known as impact beyond 2014 and for the long term.