

Institution: Lancaster University
Unit of Assessment: 30 (History)
Title of case study: Sharing Our Heritage: fostering public engagement with regional archives and 'doing history'
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Lancaster's History department has built on its tradition of service and consultancy to transform public resources for, and engagement with, the history of northern England (Lancashire, Cumbria, Northumberland, and the Borders). This has been achieved through: i) creating open-access databases of historical sources with tailored support for non-academic users; ii) training non-academics in historical research and engaging them in projects, thereby empowering people in the region and beyond to 'do history', particularly through the <i>Victoria County History, Cumbria: a community-based project fostering life-long learning</i>, led by the department and funded through partnership with a charitable trust; iii) contributing to the development of a new archive centre in Carlisle, thus enhancing the region's archival infrastructure.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The research expertise which underpins the impacts described below was generated in Research Groupings A–C, and particularly by the lead researchers Keith Stringer (to 2004 Reader, from 2004 Professor of Medieval British History) and Angus Winchester (to 2012 Senior Lecturer, from 2012 Professor of Local and Landscape History).</p> <p>Stringer's research has extended understandings of northern England's history by illuminating the nature of the medieval English 'state' beyond its metropolitan heartlands (reference 2, below); demonstrating the ambiguities of people's attachments and identities within the Anglo-Scottish Borders, with particular emphasis on cross-Border connections and the roles played by semi-independent power-structures (references 1–3); and making better known the riches of both public and private archives available for studying the region, and the value of such sources for a deeper appreciation of its history (while working on references 1–3, Stringer used unpublished records in 34 different archives). These researches have directly informed major initiatives to maximise access to original sources for all interested in the region's past, as is exemplified by his role with Dauvit Broun (Glasgow) and David Carpenter (King's College London) in leading the AHRC-funded project <i>The Breaking of Britain: Cross-Border Society and Scottish Independence, 1216–1314</i> (2010–13), which has developed two databases of translated sources to cater for both beginners and experts: People of Medieval Scotland, 1093–1314 (33% overall responsibility as historical adviser), and People of Northern England, 1216–1286 (60% overall responsibility).</p> <p>Two specific strands of Winchester's research in local and landscape history underpin the impact articulated here. His work on manorial administration includes extensive study of manor courts and their role in agrarian regulation (reference 4) and preparation of a corpus of manor court byelaws from northern England. His expertise in this field resulted in his directing the projects to create the online Manorial Documents Register for Cumbria (2005–6, funded by HLF) and Lancashire (2011–12, funded by The National Archives). These contributed to the national online database of manorial documents and involved preparing training materials and events for non-academic users of these records. A second aspect has been his longstanding research commitment to the local and environmental history of Cumbria, including preparing definitive scholarly editions of substantial seventeenth-century sources (references 5–6), which represent a major enhancement of the region's historical resource. This work has underpinned his initiation and leadership of the <i>Victoria County History, Cumbria</i> project, part of the largest local history project in England which is internationally recognised as a standard work of historical reference. He took the key role in founding the Cumbria County History Trust (established 2010) which supports the project.</p>
<p>3. References to the research</p> <p>1) K.J. Stringer, <i>The Reformed Church in Medieval Galloway and Cumbria</i> (Friends of the Whithorn Trust, 2003), The Eleventh Whithorn Lecture, 2002, a prestigious lecture series, many of whose lecturers are Fellows of the British Academy, submitted to RAE2008</p> <p>2) M.L. Holford and K.J. Stringer, <i>Border Liberties and Loyalties: North-East England, c.1200–c.1400</i>, Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2010 (60% input as sole editor and co-author); 'pre-published' version of Stringer's chapters submitted to RAE2008, indicative review: 'few have</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

had the mettle to examine systematically and exhaustively the widely scattered record materials ... Fewer still could have accomplished that daunting task as capably as [Stringer] does.' *Speculum*, 86 (2011), p. 765

3) K.J. Stringer, 'Aspects of the Norman Diaspora in Northern England and Southern Scotland', in K.J. Stringer and A. Jotischky (eds), *Norman Expansion: Connections, Continuities and Contrasts*, Ashgate Publishing Ltd: Farnham, 2013, pp. 9–47, in REF2014

4) A.J.L. Winchester, 'Regional identity in the Lake Counties: land tenure and the Cumbrian landscape', *Northern History*, 42 (1) (2005), pp. 29–48

5) A.J.L. Winchester with M. Wane (eds), *Thomas Denton: A Perambulation of Cumberland, 1687–8*, Surtees Society, and Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society, Record Series, 2003, submitted to RAE2008

6) A.J.L. Winchester (ed.), *John Denton's History of Cumberland*, Surtees Society, and CWAAS, Record Series, 2010, in REF2014

The following grants provide further evidence of the quality of the underpinning research:

£119,270: Leverhulme Trust for *Border Liberties and Loyalties in North-East England, c.1200–c.1400*: Stringer, Co-I, 2002–6, with Durham University

£250,126: AHRC for *The Norman Edge: Identity and State-Formation on the Frontiers of Europe, c.1050–1200*: Stringer, PI, 2008–11

£841,980: AHRC for *The Breaking of Britain: Cross-Border Society and Scottish Independence, 1216–1314*: Stringer, Co-I, 2010–13, with Glasgow University and King's College London

£4,100: British Academy for work on John Denton's History of Cumberland: Winchester, 2003

£46,000: HLF for Cumbrian Manorial Records Project; also aided by grants from Friends of Cumbria Archives (£1,500) and The Kirby Trust (£1,000): Winchester, 2005–6

£23,301: The National Archives for the Lancashire Manorial Records Project: Winchester, 2011–12

£49,959: Cumbria County History Trust for the *Victoria County History, Cumbria* project: Winchester, 2011–12

4. Details of the impact

The department's research expertise in the history of northern England and the Borders, and specialist knowledge of relevant archival sources, have been channelled to benefit the flowering of interest in family and local history among the public at large. Through a series of collaborations the department has created a sea-change in the accessibility, awareness and understanding of these sources for amateur historians, thereby improving public participation and aptitudes in historical research and contributing to the cultural enrichment of the region. Resourced through partnerships forged by the department with heritage charities and government bodies, the developments below have all achieved significant reach, attested by increased use of archives, as well as by endorsements and testimonials.

i) Creation of online resources and research tools

Funded research partnerships led by the department have generated new free-to-all databases, which transform access to archival resources and include user-friendly guides to open these resources to non-academic users. Foremost among these are:

Manorial Documents Register [MDR]. The department has created the Cumbria and Lancashire sections of the MDR, the national online database of manorial records hosted by The National Archives [TNA] (<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/mdr/>). The projects, in 2005–06 and 2011–12 respectively, were funded by HLF and TNA, with Winchester as PI. The impact of the new sections is illustrated by the fact that, since the MDR Lancashire project was completed in 2012, hits on the Lancashire section of the database account for c.10% of all monthly visits to the national MDR (**source 1**). The MDR Cumbria project was accompanied by an online guide to manorial records (<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/manorialrecords/>), designed and built as an integral part of the project and subsequently published in revised form in hard copy. This is now the standard gateway to these records, supporting the MDR and widely used by family and local historians. Andrew Rowley of TNA comments: '[it] is superb and represents a national resource on manorial records, not simply a regional one' (**source 2**). Since 2008 the online guide has received an average of over 10,000 visits per year (800–1,000 hits per month), the majority from across the UK but reaching a global audience (over a 3-day period in June 2013 alone, visitors to the site came from Argentina, Australia, Japan, Switzerland and the USA) (**source 3**). Part of the online

guide (the glossary of manorial terms) has been included as a free download by *Your Family Tree* magazine. Related public events have been held to support the MDR database: in April 2013 a training day on using manorial records was run jointly with the University's Centre for North West Regional Studies and Lancashire Archives (83 members of the public attended). As a member of the national MDR Advisory Panel, Winchester has also played a supervisory role in projects elsewhere, in the drive to achieve full national coverage of this online resource.

People of Northern England database, created as part of the AHRC-funded project *The Breaking of Britain* (Stringer, Co-I, 2010–13). This project built on another AHRC-sponsored initiative, *The Paradox of Medieval Scotland* (on whose International Advisory Committee Stringer served, 2006–9), to develop the People of Medieval Scotland, 1093–1314 database (<http://db.poms.ac.uk>, launched September 2012), and to establish alongside it the interlinked People of Northern England, 1216–1286 database (<http://pone.ac.uk>). PoMS now gives instant access to c.8,500 records in English translation (c.300 supplied by Stringer from his own research), and has revolutionised access to medieval Scottish and Border history. Nothing like PoNE, where translated royal records involving c.16,000 people and places in Cumberland, Westmorland and Northumberland can be searched in various ways, has been prepared before for any English region. Stringer took special responsibility for PoNE, and recruited and chaired a Knowledge Transfer Committee, which included archivists and other outreach specialists to ensure non-academic involvement in website design and training, and thus the widest possible impact beyond academia. In July 2013, 122 members of the public attended the launch of PoNE at a dedicated Day School and/or local open-to-all training events for PoNE (and PoMS) in Cumbria and Northumberland, which were organised by the department in partnership with the county archive services. Participants' feedback includes such comments as 'thank you – a very useful new resource for me'; 'amazing – will tell local history group' (**source 4**). In July 2013 the databases had 2,648 visits, some from as far afield as Australasia, North America and Poland (**sources 5–6**).

ii) Enhanced training and improved skills for non-academic historians

The department's expertise in Cumbria's history resulted in the establishment of the *Victoria County History, Cumbria* project in 2010. Promoting public participation in historical research has been central to the project since its inception. Led by Winchester, this flagship community-based venture pioneers new ways of working with volunteer amateur local historians in order to contribute to a highly respected national work of reference. The project is the fruit of a partnership between the department and the Cumbria County History Trust, a charity whose trustees include representatives of a range of regional bodies, including Cumbria County Council, The National Trust, the Lake District National Park Authority and the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society [CWAAS]. *VCH Cumbria* forms the hub of an interactive network which promotes life-long learning by developing skills and generating new knowledge through the involvement and training of volunteers in serious historical research. Its website is a 'resource bank' of local historical data, which acts as both a training aid to support volunteers' work and a databank housing the fruits of their research. A training programme run by the department, partly funded by the Rural Development Programme for England, has offered by July 2013 six courses at three venues in Cumbria, attracting a total of 121 attendances. These training events taught specialist skills, such as palaeography and the use of online sources, and were complemented by meetings and drop-in 'surgeries' at record offices.

The key feature of *VCH Cumbria* is the creation of new historical research by volunteers working under the department's supervision. In 2012, in a major enhancement of the local historical resource, over 100 volunteers from across Cumbria compiled historical digests for each of the county's 344 parishes/townships for posting on the website. Supported by the training programme, a core of 21 people and three local history societies are also currently engaged, under close direction from the department, in the painstaking and extensive original research required to compile full-scale parish histories. Thanks to the department's support and guidance, members of local communities are enabled to engage in structured, purposeful, historical activity, acquiring expertise and confidence which not only boost their ability to 'do history' now and in the future, but benefit all who wish to learn more about Cumbria's past. As volunteers have commented: 'the biggest impact on many of us is being able to make a real contribution to a national historical publication and, as a result, becoming ... more "professional" in our approach to local history'; 'this is a tremendous opportunity to enhance our skills and achievements ... It is impossible to

Impact case study (REF3b)

exaggerate the importance of this to us' (**sources 7–8**).

The project's website at <http://www.cumbriacountyhistory.org.uk/> represents a major extension of the county's existing historical resource, and is rapidly becoming a first port of call for all interested in Cumbria's history. Since volunteers completed the historical digests, visits to the site have risen rapidly, the monthly total more than doubling from Autumn 2012, to stand at over 1,600 visits (equivalent to an annual total of almost 20,000 hits) in May 2013 (**source 9**).

iii) Enhancing the region's archival infrastructure

Stringer's research-based archival knowledge has regularly informed the strategic development of Cumbria Archive Service as a major cultural focus for people of all ages. As a member of Cumbria County Council's Archives Advisory Group (2002–), he helped to win the support of political decision-makers for a state-of-the-art archive centre at Carlisle with much improved facilities, including high-quality exhibition and meeting spaces; was influential in securing HLF moneys (£4.8M towards a construction cost of £8.5M); and represented the public's viewpoint in the new building's design. His role in realising this project, completed in June 2011, has helped to bring major new archives to Carlisle, and to achieve much improved public engagement with Cumbria's historical resources and heritage, especially through community and educational activities. Visitor figures show an average monthly increase of 20% since 2010, with school children numbers rising by 113% overall (to 1,771 in the second full year of operation, June 2012–13) (**source 10**). He has also been closely involved in strategic reviews of the Archive Service to improve its responsiveness to changing user needs. The Cumbria Archive Service Manager states: '[Stringer's] extensive knowledge as a professional medieval historian [has] provided invaluable insight and support to ... the County Council ... in defining the way it delivers the Archive Service to a wide range of user communities. [He] made a direct and positive contribution towards convincing the County Council of the need for a new archive centre [and his] academic rigour and authoritative advice carry appropriate weight both with policy makers and other groups' (**source 10**).

Regional collaborations and main beneficiaries

The value of the department's activities in these interconnected fields is exemplified by the mutually supportive partnerships built with both public bodies, such as TNA and county archive services in Cumbria, Lancashire and Northumberland, and voluntary organisations, including Cumbria County History Trust, Cumbria Local History Federation, CWAAS, Friends of Cumbria Archives, and Society of Antiquaries, Newcastle upon Tyne. The last 5 have c.2,000 members overall, and the department has free access to, and regularly uses, their publicity outlets for outreach purposes. Such support has thus enabled the department's work for the region to extend its compass and, in the case of *VCH Cumbria*, to build a wholly new structure for coordinating and assisting local historians of all backgrounds and abilities. The chief beneficiaries comprise the large constituency among the general public (both locally and globally) with an established or new-found fascination for local and family history. Thus, the impact not only enhances cultural capital by increasing knowledge and awareness of the region's history; it empowers members of the non-academic community to discover more about the history and heritage of their own communities. The overall result has been to enrich lives and to foster a new sense of ownership of the past at grassroots level.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Manorial Documents Register database: visits to county sections, Sept 2012–March 2013
2. Statement by member of Archives Sector Development Team, The National Archives: Cumbrian Manorial Records online guide
3. Visit statistics: Cumbrian Manorial Records online guide
4. Indicative feedback questionnaires, People of Northern England Day School/training sessions
5. Visit statistics: People of Medieval Scotland database, July 2013
6. Visit statistics: People of Northern England database, July 2013
7. An anonymous volunteer's perspective: *Victoria County History Cumbria* project
8. Statement by Secretary of Cumbria County History Trust/volunteer researcher: *VCH Cumbria* project
9. Indicative visit statistics: Cumbria County History Trust website
10. Statements by Cumbria Archive Service Manager: Enhancing the region's archival infrastructure