

<b>Institution: Sheffield Hallam University</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 30 History</b>
<b>Title of case study: Women Activists' Place in Britain's History and Heritage</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study presents the impact of research undertaken by Professor Clare Midgley that places nineteenth-century British women's activism within its imperial and global contexts. Impact has been achieved through advisory roles and public engagement activities with two community groups involved in projects to commemorate women, and a consultancy role with English Heritage. As a result, Midgley's research has both played a crucial role in initiating and shaping local projects to commemorate pioneering British feminists and abolitionists of local, national and global significance, whilst also influencing national policy on preserving and presenting historic sites associated with women's history.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Midgley was appointed Research Professor in History at Sheffield Hallam University in March 2006. Since then she has produced outputs that, developing on her earlier pioneering study of British women's roles in the anti-slavery movement, underpin the impacts discussed here.</p> <p>Midgley's monograph <i>Feminism and Empire</i> (published November 2007) (Reference 1) provides the first detailed study of the interconnections between the development of modern western feminism and Britain's global expansion as an imperial power between the 1790s and the 1860s. While previous scholarship on the links between feminism and imperialism focussed on the period following the emergence of an organised women's movement in the mid 1860s, Midgley's study traces the relationship between feminism and empire back to the period of the publication of Mary Wollstonecraft's foundational feminist text, <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> in 1792, at the height of the first major public campaign against the transatlantic slave trade. The specific sections of the book which underpin impact are: Chapter 1, which clarifies the evolving relationship between debate on the 'woman question' and the shaping of colonial discourse in the work of Wollstonecraft and other writers; Chapter 2, which highlights the intertwining of 'domestic' and 'political' spheres in the nineteenth century through exploring women's leadership of the consumer boycott of slave-grown sugar; and Chapter 4, which demonstrates the vital role of female missionary memoirs as forms of commemorative practice which gave early public recognition to women's role as missionaries.</p> <p>Midgley's subsequent research further illuminates women's involvement in transatlantic and broader transnational networks of anti-slavery, feminism and social reform. Research underpinning impact includes new comparative insights into relationships between the abolitionist and feminist movements in Britain and the USA (Reference 2). This research is innovative in bringing scholarship on transatlantic reform into dialogue with scholarship on the British empire, resulting in new insights into the distinctive use of the woman-slave analogy in Britain compared to the US. Through analysing female anti-slavery as a form of early feminism, it also lays a new emphasis on the British rather than American origins of an organised transatlantic feminist movement, and shows how the articulation of racial difference as racial inequality was inherent in the development of modern western feminism. Other recent research underpinning impact highlights the links between individual women's trajectories of anti-slavery activism and their religious journeys between different dissenting traditions, especially Rational Dissent and Quakerism (Reference 4), and draws out the distinctive influences that specific national and transnational religious cultures had on a broader spectrum of female reformers in Britain (Reference 3).</p> <p>Midgley is currently engaged in a major new research project that reinterprets Indian, British and American debates on the 'woman question' in the nineteenth-century age of empire through examining an influential cross-cultural network of activists who promoted liberal religion and social reform. This project pushes forward the agenda of transnational history through exploring an informal and voluntary network that operated both within and beyond the borders of empire and</p>

linked transatlantic to imperial circuits of reform. It challenges standard interpretations of the nineteenth-century world through drawing attention to a long history of collaboration and cultural interchange between activists belonging to groups which, in dominant western colonial discourse, were unequally positioned as coloniser/colonised, white/black, western/eastern and Christian/Hindu, and whose relations have usually been seen as characterised by cultural conflict and contests for authority and power. Specific research underpinning impact encompasses Midgley's new interpretation of leading English Unitarian activist Mary Carpenter as a transnational social reformer (Reference 5), and her demonstration of British women's key roles in sustaining cultures of commemoration connecting transnational communities of social activists across religious and geopolitical divides (Reference 6).

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

1. *Feminism and Empire. Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790-1865* (London, Routledge, 2007). This research monograph 'makes a compelling case for historians of gender and imperialism to pay closer attention to the years between the late eighteenth century and the mid-nineteenth century. It confirms and extends the contention that race and empire were constituent rather than peripheral to the making of British feminism' (Adele Perry, review in *Women's History Review*, 19:5, 809-811).

2. 'British abolition and feminism in transatlantic perspective' in K.K. Sklar and J. Brewer, *Women's Rights and Transatlantic Antislavery in the Era of Emancipation* (Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 121-142. Article developed from an invited paper to an international colloquium at Yale University.

3. 'Women, religion and reform' in Sue Morgan and Jacqueline de Vries, eds, *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940* (London, Routledge, 2010), pp. 138-158. In her review of the book in *English Historical Review* (Feb. 2012, pp. 203-5), Alana Harris commented 'Clare Midgley's chapter stands out as a consummate survey of female reform activity on abolition, rescue work, and anti-slavery within a transnational perspective'

4. 'The dissenting voice of Elizabeth Heyrick: an exploration of the links between gender, religious dissent and anti-slavery radicalism' in Elizabeth J. Clapp and Julie Roy Jeffrey, eds, *Women, Dissent and Anti-Slavery in Britain and America* (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 88-110. Stemming from an invited paper to a conference at Dr Williams Library, London.

5. 'Mary Carpenter and the Brahmo Samaj of India: a transnational perspective on social reform in the age of empire', *Women's History Review*, 22, 3 (June 2013), pp. 363-385. A reader's report on this article commented: 'it is surprising that we have had to wait so long for a thorough-going revisionist study of such a famous female reformer and this author has to be commended for bringing to the fore the cross-cultural pollinations and fruit of efforts by Carpenter over three continents'.

6. 'Transoceanic commemoration and connections between Bengali Brahmos and British and American Unitarians', *The Historical Journal*, 54, 3 (Sept. 2011), pp. 773-796.

Outputs 1, 2 and 3 can be supplied by the HEI on request. Outputs 4, 5 and 6 and included among Midgley's research outputs in the HEI's REF submission.

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

Building on the research and publications detailed above, impact has been developed in two ways. First, through pivotal roles in two community projects, one in London and one in Edinburgh, which aim to gain national public recognition for leading British women anti-slavery and feminist activists. Reflecting the broader dearth of public monuments to women in Britain, these individuals have not hitherto been commemorated by public memorials despite their local, national and global significance to the history of the development of progressive politics. Secondly, Midgley's research underpins her consultancy role with English Heritage in progressing their agenda of increasing the public visibility of the hitherto under-represented national heritage of women through addressing

the challenges of women's continuing marginalisation in public narratives of national history and the tendency to dismiss as insignificant women's domestic, private and local associations with England's heritage.

***'Mary on the Green' project: commemorating Mary Wollstonecraft***

Midgley has played a key role in initiating a project to erect the first public memorial to the founder of modern feminism, Mary Wollstonecraft. Her involvement draws on research insights into the history of the development of British feminism in the context of the anti-slavery movement (Reference 1, Chapter 1). These explored the pioneering role in women's entry into public life played by women like Wollstonecraft who had strong links to cultures of rational dissent and Unitarianism (References 3 to 6), and the historical significance of memorialisation in making visible women's public activism (Reference 1, Chapter 4). The move to erect a memorial to Wollstonecraft was stimulated by Midgley's co-organisation of a week-long series of public commemorative events celebrating the 250th anniversary of Wollstonecraft's birth, held at Newington Green Unitarian Church, London in 2009 and attracting audiences of up to 120 people drawn from the local boroughs of Hackney and Islington, the London Unitarian community, and London-based feminist activists and politicians Midgley produced a booklet on 'Mary Wollstonecraft and the Dissenters of Newington Green', 800 copies of which were distributed to the public at these events and at subsequent church and local community events and the annual London 'Open House' day (Source 1) The booklet was republished as an article in the local *Islington Archaeology and History Society Newsletter* [ISSN 1369-3751] Autumn 2009, pp. 3-7. These activities led to an invitation in May 2010 to address the AGM of Newington Green Action Group, an active community group leading the regeneration of the area, about Wollstonecraft's local links and her global historical significance, and a summary of Midgley's talk was posted on their website at: <http://newingtongreen.org.uk/ngag/prof-clare-midgleys-talk-mary-wollstonecraft> The enthusiasm generated by Midgley's talk resulted in a unanimous vote by the 50 people present to launch a fund-raising campaign to erect a local memorial to Wollstonecraft (Source 2). The 'Mary on the Green' project committee was set up, and it has to date raised over £20,000 and is currently beginning the process of selecting a sculptor and memorial design. Midgley stimulated additional local interest in the project through a talk on Wollstonecraft at International Women's Day celebrations sponsored by Islington Council in March 2013, attended by around 100 people (Source 1).

***'Women on the platform' project: commemorating Scottish women abolitionists and feminists***

Midgley is expert academic advisor (with James Walvin, Emeritus Prof., University of York) to a women's history group in Edinburgh that is generating public support for a permanent memorial to three local women who played leading roles in the anti-slavery and feminist movements. She was involved in the successful bid made by the group (part of the Adult Learning Project at Tollcross Community Centre in Edinburgh) to the 'All Our Stories' Heritage Lottery Fund for their project (ref no: AS-12-03653 - funding for the period January to December 2013). Midgley gave a talk to around 20 members of the group in January 2013 which highlighted the transatlantic dimensions of links between abolitionism and feminism (Reference 2) and the leading role of women in the boycott of slave-grown produce (Reference 1, Chapter 2). Feedback from the group's tutor (Source 3) stated: 'This fed directly into our lottery projects and was hugely valuable to us. We now have headings, sources and further topics to fill in the social context for our studies, and Clare could not have been more helpful and constructive in her support for our project'. This new knowledge and understanding fed into the group's organisation of the public launch of the project in Edinburgh on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2013. This included involving those who attended in painting pots with slogans such as 'sugar not made by slaves' to echo the activities of the nineteenth-century abolitionist women described by Midgley, and to encourage links with contemporary ethical consumer campaigns. Midgley's public lecture 'Campaigning women: abolitionists and feminists in nineteenth-century Edinburgh' formed the central focus of this public launch event. As well as covering some of the same ground as her earlier talk, this drew on additional research (References 3, 4) to explain the significance of the fact that the group of Edinburgh activists all came from Quaker backgrounds. Around 90 people attended, including activists from Edinburgh-based women's, migrant welfare and adult education organisations, teachers and pupils from Edinburgh schools, interested

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

members of the public, and representatives from Women's History Scotland, the National Library of Scotland, Glasgow Women's Library, the Mapping Memorial to Women project, and the Glasgow-based Mary Barbour commemorative project. In a feedback questionnaire (Source 3) completed by attendees, comments on Midgley's talk included 'a fascinating topic', 'excellent' and 'I want to find out more', with particular interest expressed into insights exploring relationship between Quakers and anti-slavery, links between abolition and feminism, and men's treatment of women at the World Anti-Slavery Convention. This event also began to generate ideas from the public for the forms that memorialising the women might take; Midgley's involvement in the project is on-going.

***English Heritage: under-represented groups and the historic environment***

In May 2012 Midgley was an invited academic expert participant in a one-day seminar on 'Women in England', part of a series of seminars through which English Heritage (EH) consulted about the significance of the historic environment for groups currently under-represented in its work. This consultation was part of EH's National Heritage Protection Plan (NHPP), an initiative to determine how to manage a prioritised programme to identify and protect England's heritage. The seminar brought together Midgley and seven other academic, community and museum experts with seven senior members of EH staff. Midgley's contributions drew on her range of recent research into the history of English women's involvement in public life and activism (References 1 to 5) to suggest the need for EH to take account of women's distinctive, but often invisible, relationship with both private and public spaces when protecting and presenting heritage sites (Appendix 5.5.7). It also drew on her research into transnational networks of reformers (References 5, 6) to stress the importance of giving public recognition to England's international links and to the, at times, transient heritage associated with visiting activists. Her recorded suggestions (anonymised but with the identifier [W1]) were included in the report *Responses from the Consultation on Under-Represented Heritages*, which collated responses from the 80 expert participants in the series of consultative seminars. This report was presented to the NHPP Implementation Board in October 2012 and published on the EH website, with EH's official response published on the website as *A Response to the BOP Consulting Report from English Heritage* (Source 5). Midgley's input contributed to the recognition in the report of the need to consider smaller sites, common places and whole areas or linked sites, the need to make more available information on the huge range of sites reflecting the history on non-elite groups, and the importance of documenting the heritage of transient communities. EH is currently developing further detailed practical action plans to address the implications of the consultation. As a result of her participation in this consultation, Midgley has been placed on EH's advisory list of experts, and participated in the annual consultation survey on the NHPP (February 2013) (Source 4).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)**Corroborating contacts:**

1. The Minister, Newington Green Church, London
2. Chair, Newington Green Action Group, London
3. Tutor, DRB Scottish Women's History Group, Edinburgh
4. Social Inclusion and Diversity Adviser, Government Advice, English Heritage

**Other sources:**

5. BOP Consultation report and of English Heritage response available in the 'Professional' section of the website (Heritage Protection: National Heritage Protection Plan: Consultation): <<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk>>