

<b>Institution: University of East Anglia</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 30 History</b>
<b>Title of case study: The 'Walberswick Project': Coastal Defence of World War Two</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Building on the academic research of staff and post-graduates, the 'Walberswick Project' began as a local study, emerging from the general interest in landscape fostered in the UEA School of History by Professor Tom Williamson, and more specifically from Dr Robert Liddiard's expertise in medieval fortifications and their physical setting. Such expertise was here refocused on what had previously been the almost totally neglected Second World War anti-invasion landscapes of East Anglia. The realization that an entire world of landscape archaeology was ripe for rediscovery, and that what was true of Suffolk was no less true of the 'Atlantic Wall', stretching from Norway to Spain, has led via the project's website to the delivery of high-quality academic research to organisations charged with managing European heritage. The computer technology developed here has fed into further projects that now span the English Channel and several periods of history. Successful bids for European Union and National Heritage Lottery funding have ensured impact that is international in scope, with results disseminated via websites, print publications and other media to the very widest of constituencies.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The Suffolk Coasts and Heaths, a region known as the 'Sandlings', is a unique landscape in east Suffolk. Much of its distinctive character comes from its countryside, with the area designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty internationally significant for its biodiversity. Substantial areas are under the guardianship of public conservation bodies. The particular patterns of land-use here have left Second World War military archaeology undisturbed and therefore ripe for rediscovery.</p> <p>The study of this landscape has been of long-standing interest to Williamson, who has drawn attention to the significance of the 'Sandlings', most recently in a co-authored monograph on the twentieth-century East Anglian countryside, <i>Changing Landscapes, 1870-1950</i> (2008). The more general idea of placing fortifications into their landscape context lies at the core of Liddiard's research into medieval castles, most significantly through his monographs <i>Landscapes of Lordship</i> (2000) and <i>Castles in Context</i> (2005).</p> <p>Liddiard first began to appreciate the significance of the twentieth-century military archaeology of the Sandlings as the result of an MA Dissertation submitted in 2008 by one of his students, David Sims. This work broke new ground in mapping the wartime anti-invasion landscape and the archaeological remains of military training. Sims' research was especially innovative in its combination of field survey with documentary evidence, in particular the relevant unit war diaries held in The National Archives. These allowed surviving remains to be given a precise historical context. The result was the most detailed picture of Second World War coastal defence at brigade and battalion level then available for the east of England.</p> <p>Spotting the potential of this work for wider study, Liddiard initiated a broader programme of academic research, with articles in peer-reviewed journals. His detailed case study, 'A Piece of Coastal Crust' (<i>History</i>, 2012, with Sims) sheds new light on the exact mechanism by which Britain's 1940 defences were planned and executed and casts doubt on the traditional notion that schemes of defences were necessarily 'top-down' in nature. 'A Hedgehog on the Heath' (<i>Archaeological Journal</i> 2013) is one of the few studies dedicated to Second World War training landscapes, via a survey and discussion of the landscape of exercise 'Kruschen', a major military exercise staged in the build-up to D-Day.</p> <p>As this research revealed, the military heritage of the Sandlings was not only of considerable</p>

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historical significance but could be presented to the public in ways that were not previously possible, using innovative electronic dissemination. Furthermore, research from an English base has international reach. Since 2008, Liddiard has disseminated a new understanding of military archaeology via conference papers and seminars delivered in Heidelberg and Caen.

### 3. References to the research

R. Liddiard, *'Landscapes of Lordship': the Castle and the Countryside in Medieval Norfolk, 1066-1200* (BAR British Series 309, 2000).

R. Liddiard, *Castles in Context: A Social History of Fortification in England and Wales, 1066-1500* (Macclesfield, Windgather Press, 2005).

R. Liddiard and D. Sims, 'A Piece of Coastal Crust: The Origins of a Second World War Defence Landscape at Walberswick, Suffolk', *History* 97 (2012), 402-30.

R. Liddiard and D. Sims, 'A Hedgehog on the Heath: The Second World War Landscape of Exercise 'Kruschen', Dunwich, Suffolk', *The Archaeological Journal* 170 (2013), 519-49

T. Williamson and S. Wade-Martins, *The Countryside of East Anglia: Changing Landscapes, 1870-1950* (Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 2008).

**Justification of Quality:** The outputs listed here were for the most part published in well-respected peer-reviewed journals. Liddiard and Williamson are both internationally recognized experts in landscape history, with Liddiard a leading authority on the landscape setting of castles and medieval fortifications.

### 4. Details of the impact

Liddiard and Sims' research on Britain's anti-invasion landscapes was chosen as a portfolio case study to promote 'Virtual Past', a commercial venture specialising in the computer reconstruction of historic buildings and environments, set up by the School of History in collaboration with UEA's Computing School. The ensuing 'Walberswick Project', funded from within the School, focussed on the defence of the village of Walberswick in 1940 and its surrounding countryside. The principal output was a visual showpiece project, made freely available via the web (thus far more than 100,000 'hits'), with four computer-generated animations, each showing a different aspect of Walberswick's wartime defences. In order to enhance the user experience, separate sections of the website provided historical background and access to online original documents, maps and photographs. The historical information on the website was entirely written by Liddiard. A project education pack (<http://www.walberswickww2.co.uk/teaching-pack/>) for use with the National Curriculum Key Stage 2 was written by an education specialist, Dr Lesley Walker. Volunteers from the Walberswick community assisted in the recording of standing buildings. The construction and population of the website took place in the twelve months from February 2009, and generated sufficient material to make a launch possible in October that year. The website launch coincided with a feature on Radio 4's *Making History* programme and press coverage by regional television and newspapers. The project won a 'Highly Commended' award, in the Best Representation of Archaeology in the Media category at the British Archaeological Awards 2010. In the same year, Liddiard received a CUE East Community Engagement Award for the project's contribution to public engagement.

More significantly, international impact followed. As a direct result of the Walberswick venture, Liddiard and the UEA School of History are now involved with the Province of Zeeland (Netherlands) and a consortium of partners from four European Union nations (Belgium, the Netherlands, France, and the UK). These relationships led to a sustainable heritage project entitled 'World War Two Heritage', and an major application to the EU Interreg IV Two Seas Programme for which Liddiard was the PI, an application that was in 2011, with matched funding totalling

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4,209,180 euros awarded over three-years (INTERREG IV A 2 Seas Programme (7<sup>th</sup> Call) (Project Code: NL\_WW2\_Heritage) 'World War Two Heritage. Awarded 6.6.11). This project also employed Sims as project researcher and provides an international basis for Second World War heritage tourism, promoting the shared history of the partner nations through cross-border co-operation in the development of tourist trails, visitor interpretation, published guides and web-based resources.

Further business has since flowed in to Liddiard and Virtual Past. This includes a commission from the company Lyndsay Design on behalf of the Bishop's Palace Wells, Somerset, to create a digital model of the Palace through time (contract £18,000). This was part of a wider programme of enhancing visitor interpretation. The completed model was delivered in September 2012. A similar model was commissioned from Leeds Castle in Kent (contract £69,000), completed in June 2013. In 2012 Virtual Past successfully tendered for a contract to create digital models of six Norman castles (Caen, Colchester, Falaise, Hastings, Norwich, Rochester) as part of an EU-funded project (INTERREG IV A 2 Seas Programme) 'Norman Castle Connections'. Liddiard was instrumental in winning the bid and his expertise is being fed into the historical animations, for delivery in March 2014 (contract £113,000).

**Benefits:**

- Walberswick has grown from a local history project supported by a website close to the world of computer gaming into a 4 million Euro Interregional IV project whose findings have been disseminated to an international audience and have been incorporated into cross-border visitor interpretation at a range of museums and public ventures across the North Sea region (see the Interregional IV website at <http://www.worldwar2heritage.com/>). This funding has also facilitated the production of the infrastructure required for sustainable historic tourism, including display boards, podcasts, educational resources, and the training of guides.
- The success of the Walberswick project has helped to ensure the commercial viability and ongoing success of UEA's School of History 'Virtual Past' venture, in turn enabling a computer modeller (John Williams) to be employed on a permanent contract, with at least four further modellers employed for fixed-term contractual work. The venture has so far generated nearly £500K in outside sponsorship: a impressive example of wealth creation.
- The Walberswick website offers a free, publically accessible online resource for the study of Second World War coastal defences, with world-wide reach. To date, the website has been consulted on over 100,000 occasions by users in over 20 countries. A measure of the website's impact has been the need to create an oral history section, which was not originally planned, in response to the enthusiastic response by members of the public with personal memories to share. The user comments left on the site have been unanimously positive: 'a fantastic resource', 'great', 'really informative', and other such plaudits. The online education pack has been used by several schools from east London in preparation for year 5-6 fieldtrip to the area as part of Keystage 2 teaching, with Sims leading 'war walks' of the area.
- The project has delivered high-quality academic work on wartime archaeology to those bodies currently responsible for managing the region's biodiversity. The results of academic work, together with supporting documentation, now inform the work of public policy-making bodies, including Natural England, The National Trust, and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, responsible for managing substantial sections of the Suffolk coast path, and the nationally significant bird reserve at Minsmere (see testimonials listed below).

Having begun as a very small speck on the local landscape, the Walberswick project has not only achieved international impact, but has made a major contribution to UEA's emergence as a centre for the study and exploitation of electronic resources in heritage and landscape archaeology. European bids have followed, most notably those from Wells, Leeds Castle, and the consortium of castles in Kent and Normandy. Virtual Past has been developed into a business that straddles the

divide between commerce and scholarship, with substantial and growing annual turn-over. Expertise first honed in the world of castles and the Norman Conquest has meanwhile had surprising but nonetheless mould-breaking relevance to the history of World War II.

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

##### Testimonials:

1. Senior Reserve Manager, Walberswick National Nature Reserve. Natural England. Northminster House, Peterborough, PE1 1UA.
2. Warden, North Suffolk Coast Reserves, RSPB, Minsmere Nature Reserve, Westleton, Saxmundham, Suffolk, IP17 3BY.
3. National Trust Archaeologist, East of England Regional Office, Westley Bottom, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 3WD.
4. The Country Trust, c/o Laurel House, The Clink, Walpole, Halesworth, Suffolk.

##### Websites:

5. The Project Website: <http://www.walberswickww2.co.uk/>
6. EU project website: <http://www.worldwar2heritage.com>
7. Virtual Past website: <http://www.virtualpast.co.uk/>
8. Radio 4's *Making History* programme
9. <http://www.walberswickww2.co.uk/teaching-pack/>