

Institution: University of Stirling
Unit of Assessment: D30 History
Title of case study: Enhancing community engagement with the historic environment
<p>1. Summary of the impact: Successive Scottish Governments, local authorities, statutory bodies and sector agencies have sought to address issues of community (re)engagement with their historic environment within community-building and place-making social agendas. Through <i>History Tomorrow</i>, our commercial history unit, we have been central to initiatives designed to restore property of the past to communities. Our major impact is with Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) projects like Prestongrange, Kilmun, and the Ochils Landscape Partnership (OLP), where community volunteers were trained and empowered to undertake their own research, thereafter becoming trainers themselves. Imparting such training skills to community volunteers restores a sense of possession of their 'own' histories and effectively inculcates post-funding sustainability amongst them.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research: Historians in this case study include Oram, Ross, Smyth and Mills and their underpinning research is focused in the field of 'public history'. A key dimension of their activity has been the enhancement of community engagement with the historic environment, first through the provision of high quality but accessible and rapidly-disseminated research but increasingly through the development of projects that underpin HLF-funded community-led projects. This commitment to enhancing community engagement with the historic environment is grounded in research experience which exposed a gathering trend towards disengagement arising from breakdowns in traditional communities, a sense of disenfranchisement stemming from the professionalization of the historic environment sector since the 1980s, and a disjunction between governmental and institutional recognition of the economic significance of this sector and popular perceptions of the value of the historic environment to the cultural and economic life of their communities.</p> <p>The full extent of this public disengagement, together with proposed measures to address it, were initially researched and set out in the Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland's <i>Report and Recommendations on Strategies for Engaging Young Adults in the Historic Environment</i> (co-author Oram). In addition, Oram's experiences as Director of the <i>Scottish Burgh Survey Project</i> and Smyth's as Principal Researcher on three 'community' record-linkage projects, <i>The Coffin Close</i>, <i>Neighbourhood Identity</i> and <i>Hospital Records and Patient Narratives</i>, identified communities' sense of disempowerment and disinheritance in respect of the cultural heritage of their own neighbourhoods, and also an absence of knowledge or skills within those communities to enable them to reconnect with their pasts. Identifying an opportunity, Oram and Smyth secured strategic University funding for a new appointment (Ross) to create and manage the commercial research and community skills-training unit called <i>History Tomorrow</i>.</p> <p>Key instances where research by <i>History Tomorrow</i> has provided the basis for community-led projects include Prestongrange, where historic research by Oram was subsequently developed into an inter-disciplinary HLF-funded community project which provided training for volunteers in oral history recording techniques (Smyth) and palaeography and archival skills (Ross).</p> <p>A similar project is the OLP where initial Clackmannanshire council-funded original research undertaken by Ross enhanced local awareness about areas of historic and cultural significance, informed community participation in local planning debates, and subsequently helped them to shape development proposals for a successful £2.26M grant application to HLF to fund 22 different community projects (Ross represents the University on the OLP executive committee). A further strand of this program continues to be the education of school children in awareness of their natural environments and all 6 primary schools in the OLP area have responded magnificently to the opportunities offered to them, including the creation of their own animated films about the field trips they have undertaken as part of Industrial Devon [Mills]</p> <p>Original research by <i>History Tomorrow</i> has also underpinned the subsequent development of two other major projects. The first of these concerns Hermitage Castle in Liddesdale where the</p>

Impact case study (REF3b)

Hermitage Action Group (HAG) commissioned Oram to research the monument's cultural significance and inform debate about the local historic environment in relation to future wind-farm development. The second example is at Kilmun (Argyll) where Ross and Oram were engaged by a local heritage group (Argyll Mausoleum Ltd) to undertake historical and architectural research on the site of the family mausoleum of the Dukes of Argyll. Their research proved that the site was originally early medieval in date and their report underpinned a successful Stage 1 HLF bid to restore the mausoleum and consolidate what remains of the medieval collegiate church. A **total funding package of £1M** has now been put in place to sympathetically restore the site and provide reinterpretation of the various monuments.

3. References to the research

Publications

- R. Oram, **Prestongrange** (Stirling, 2008)
- Historic Environment Advisory Council for Scotland, **Report and Recommendations on Strategies for Engaging Young Adults in the Historic Environment**, Presented to Michael Russell, MSP, Minister for Culture, External Affairs and the Constitution (May 2009).
- R D Oram, P F Martin, C A McKean, T Neighbour and A Cathcart, *Historic Tain: Archaeology and Development* (Edinburgh and York, 2009).
- J.J. Smyth, D. Robertson and I. McIntosh, 'Neighbourhood Identity: the Path Dependency of Class and Place', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 27 (2010), 258-73.
- A. Ross, **Kilmun Church and mausoleum**, (Stirling, 2010).
- R D Oram, **Hermitage Castle: A Report on Its History and Cultural Heritage Significance** (Stirling, 2012)
- A. Ross, **Clackmannanshire and the Ochils** (Stirling, 2013).
- J.J. Smyth and D. Robertson, 'Local Elites and Social Control: building council houses in Stirling between the wars', *Urban History*, 40 (2013), 336-54.

Grant awards

- *Life and Death in the Coffin Close: anatomy of a slum c.1855-1914*, ESRC, 2001-02, £38,674 [Smyth].
Scottish Burgh Survey, Historic Scotland, 2002-10 £80,500 [Oram].
- *Neighbourhood Identity: effects of time, location and social class*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2005-09 £43,991 [Smyth, co-Principal Investigator].
Hospital Records and Patient Narratives, Wellcome Trust, 2008-10 £48,958 [Smyth].
- *Ochils Landscape Partnership*, £2.26m, largely from Heritage Lottery Fund and EDF Energy, in conjunction with Stirling/Clackmannan Councils and 20 community groups, including the University of Stirling [Ross].
- *History Tomorrow*: in the REF2014 audit period Ross has tendered for over 60 commercial **research contracts** totalling £326,556.02, winning £214,871.76 in income, a success rate of 66%. These contracts were secured from clients including County Councils, property developers, archaeology companies, sustainable energy plcs, museums and heritage bodies [Historic Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Forestry Commission, Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Wildlife Trust].

4. Details of the impact

Enhancing community engagement with Scotland's historic environment is the impact achieved through initiatives pursued by Oram, Ross and Smyth through *History Tomorrow*. Community-focussed history and archaeology projects aimed at awareness-raising and identity-building at local levels have reunited targeted groups with their cultural heritage and historic environments. Delivery stemmed from projects which enhanced inter-generational social cohesion and restored possession of communities' own heritage to social segments previously excluded or alienated, often through appropriation of their community past or its dismissal as irrelevant.

One stimulus for this delivery was *Historic Scotland's* strategy of providing local government planners, council archaeologists and local community groups with evidence necessary for informed decision-making concerning development policies in Scotland's historic burghs. It commissioned a

Impact case study (REF3b)

team under Oram's direction to produce 'Burgh Surveys' of four historic towns. Three of these reports have been published to date and they have been further utilised by the respective local communities:

- *Historic Tain* (2009), reported by the national news, and since publication it has been extensively utilised by local communities to underpin and develop their own research projects.
- *Historic Whithorn* (2010). This has been used to inform both government and the local community to underpin current interpretations of historic locations within the town in relation to both urban planning and tourism.
- *Historic Fraserburgh* (2010). The publication of this book was reported in the local press and its contents are now informing the freely-available RCAHMS site record.

Another example of such processes in action is Prestongrange. Oram was commissioned to assess the surviving historic records and devise a programme of projects for community volunteers. His report informed a successful HLF application made on behalf of the local communities by East Lothian Council. This stipulated that Stirling University train 25 local volunteers to enable them to undertake their own research on Prestongrange and its former industries. Oral History and record-linkage projects (Smyth) focussed on the coal mine and brick factory (both closed by 1975). Volunteers were trained to interview surviving ex-employees whose testimony enriched the local historical record, exposing the former centrality of those establishments to community life. The volunteers actively continue to collect oral reminiscences. Training in basic palaeography (Ross) enabled community-based volunteers to design, undertake, interpret and write up their own research projects. The volunteers delivered their findings in a booklet that traced their training processes and how they utilised their new skills for the benefit of their community. *Digging into the Past: 800 Years at Prestongrange* (2009 – see section 5), was funded by East Lothian Council, Historic Scotland, and The Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and it provides an invaluable record of what Stirling's support enabled volunteers to achieve, underscoring the revived sense of community in an area which had previously experienced three decades of socio-economic decline. Furthermore, these investigations by Stirling-trained volunteers continue to shape East Lothian community-based investigations into their own history and landscapes in a sustainable manner. Much of what has been discovered and recorded by these volunteers informs current community-led plans for museum expansion at Prestongrange and their research continues to be used there to educate visitors and maintain local community pride in their historic environment.

History Tomorrow's experience at Prestongrange provided a model for the development of the OLP, a £2.26m HLF collaboration with Stirling and Clackmannanshire Councils and 20 different community groups to improve understanding of and access to the environmental and built heritage of the Ochils. A Research Assistant from the University of Stirling [McAlister] has been seconded to this project as Research & Interpretation Officer. Smyth trained 15 volunteers in Oral History techniques. Apart from helping to develop this project with the two local councils, Ross trained 20 local volunteers in researching local history and palaeographic skills, as well researching the pre-1600 history of the OLP area. His report subsequently inspired local OLP volunteers to search for landscape and material archaeological remains relating to the (lost) twelfth century royal forest of Clackmannan. In August 2013 the remains of a structure now identified as a hunting lodge, together with the turf banks of a former deer chase, were discovered on the hillside above Castle Campbell and subsequently excavated by 50 OLP community volunteers under the supervision of a National Trust for Scotland archaeologist. In addition, Ross's report on the historic environment of the OLP area has now fed into an open-access virtual landscape and historical reconstruction of important cultural sites within the OLP area, including structures now lost. This project, however, has a much wider remit to engage different types of local communities, ranging across society from primary and secondary school pupils (with materials provided for teachers) to the unemployed, and the OLP has also acted as a vehicle to widen wilderness access (by constructing new or improving existing walking and cycling trails in the Hillfoot Glens), raising local awareness about the historic environment and Nature, and by removing foreign invasive species of plants. A final impact of this project has been the recording and conservation of hitherto vandalised grave markers on abandoned church sites in the OLP area by local volunteers. This has actively restored a sense of community pride in these sites and encouraged new genealogical studies. Vandalism of these sites has ceased since the OLP volunteers began to manage and conserve them.

A final example of our impact upon different communities is our report on Hermitage Castle in Liddesdale (Oram). Here, initial community-funded research commissioned by HAG resulted in *Hermitage Castle: A Report on Its History and Cultural Heritage Significance*. HAG used web-dissemination of this document to enhance awareness of the monument's cultural significance locally, nationally and internationally, which in turn informed community participation and external intervention in local planning debates concerning wind farm developments locally; indirectly, it has actively enabled them to shape future development proposals affecting their historic environment. Clearly, the publicised successes of such community-based historic environment projects have established *History Tomorrow* and the University of Stirling as a key provider of publicly-accessible community-oriented research reports and volunteer training.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- ❖ <http://www.heacs.org.uk/documents/2009/applejuice.pdf> - commissioned report identifying good practice and case studies for engagement of young adults.
- ❖ <http://www.socantscot.org/article.asp?aid=428> - Society of Antiquaries of Scotland Newsletter, detailing publication of the HEACS' 'Engaging Young Adults in the Historic Environment' report.
- ❖ http://hc.english-heritage.org.uk/content/pub/hlf_external_research_review_july09_web.pdf - report by HLF on Values and Benefits of Heritage, citing HEACS report.
- ❖ <http://www.thesouthernreporter.co.uk/news/local-headlines/hermitage-valley-wind-farm-relieve-as-firm-delays-application-due-to-eskdalemuir-station-1-2228222> Newspaper report of Hermitage wind farm development and HAG use of Oram report.
- ❖ V. Nix [Conservation Officer, Dumfries & Galloway Council], *Whithorn Conservation Area Appraisal* (March 2012) – 'The Burgh Survey is an important and detailed appraisal that should be referred to before any development proposals are considered', Page 4.
- ❖ http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/844/archaeology/1171/archaeology_publications/3 - *Digging into the Past: 800 Years at Prestongrange* (2010), community archaeology project report, from <http://www.prestongrange.org/pcap/pages/news.php> - Prestongrange Community Archaeology Project.
- ❖ B Simpson, 'The Prestongrange Community Archaeology Project Open day', in *History Scotland* 8(i), p.10, Jan/Feb 2008; eadem and M Johnson, 'Community archaeology at Prestongrange: Trying to leave an Imprint', in *ibid* 9(ii), pp.8-10, March/April 2009 - c.14,000 copies sold.
- ❖ J Smyth, D Robertson, I MacIntosh, *Neighbourhood Identity: effects of time, location and social class*, Joseph Rowntree foundation, 2008, pp. 134
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/neighbourhood-identity-effects-time-location-and-social-class> . This report has now been downloaded over 5,000 times; in 2009 it was cited in 'Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power', a Government Command Paper written by the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Hazel Blears [<http://sandbox.opsi.gov.uk/paper/cm/7427>]; other bodies which have referred to various aspects of the Report's findings include The Young Foundation, Play Scotland, Beyond Current Horizons: technology, children, schools and families, IGNITE - Regional Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Communities in NE England and FiLo – The Fieldwork in London Network.
- ❖ Newspaper report of Dollar Glen dig:
<http://www.alloaAdvertiser.com/news/roundup/articles/2013/10/10/474279-dollar-dig-is-a-day-of-discovery/>
- ❖ *Ochils Landscape Partnership* – Heritage Lottery Funded heritage access and regeneration project with Stirlingshire and Clackmannanshire Councils and over 20 community groups (<http://ochils.org.uk/>).