Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Southampton

Unit of Assessment: 27 English Language and Literature

Title of case study: 27-01 Re-Making Places: Medieval Heritage, Regeneration and Regional Development

Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013 – 2019

Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:

Name(s):	**Role(s) (e.g. job title):**	**Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:**
Catherine Clarke	Professor of English	September 2012 – January 2019
Harriett Webster	Post-doctoral Researcher	January 2013 – June 2014
Chloe McKenzie	Research Fellow	September 2017 – August 2018

Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 – December 2020

Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N

1. Summary of the impact

This case study shows how University of Southampton research into medieval places, identities and stories has re-made and re-animated lost historic landscapes for diverse user communities today, bringing significant social, cultural and economic benefits across the England-Wales border region and beyond. The research team have worked with a wide range of stakeholders and agencies, as well as commercial partners, to develop new approaches to heritage interpretation, heritage-based urban regeneration, new arts and tourism ventures, and regional tourism capacity-building. By reconstructing a forgotten medieval pilgrimage route, this research boosted tourism in the region, fostered wide engagement with local history via an interactive digital map and created new business opportunities; it also transformed an artist's practice in ways that continued to shape public understanding of pilgrimage at London's Southwark Cathedral during the Year of Cathedrals and Pilgrimage (2020). The innovative engagement strategies developed through the research have received international recognition, and the projects have been cited as a model of the public benefits of research in policy documents for the UK government.

2. Underpinning research

How can new research recover, analyse and re-make historic medieval landscapes? How can lost or invisible historic environments and cultural geographies be made visible and re-animated for modern communities? And what kinds of value can medieval stories about place and belief offer for place-making strategies today?

Clarke was PI on the AHRC-funded research project 'City Witness: Place and Perspective in Medieval Swansea', based at Southampton (2013-14), which used innovative methodologies to explore space, spatial representation and spatial practices in medieval Swansea, using these insights to extend our broader understanding of medieval space, identity and culture, with particular attention to urban environments and border regions.

This research was developed in response to a request from the City and County of Swansea (local government) for support with a new heritage-driven strategy to support urban regeneration. A thriving port, a marcher base for the lords of Gower, and a multi-cultural urban community, Swansea was an important centre in the Middle Ages, comparable with many other historic European towns. Yet the medieval legacy of Swansea is almost invisible today. Wartime bombing and later re-development of the city centre have almost completely obscured the traces of the medieval urban layout and its buildings. 'City Witness' worked with a unique research resource: a manuscript in the Vatican Library (MS Vat. Lat. 4015) containing nine eyewitness accounts of the hanging of the Welsh outlaw William Cragh in Swansea in 1290. Cragh came back to life in what was understood by local people as a miracle of St Thomas of Hereford. The project produced the first full edition and translation of these depositions (Harriett Webster), integrating them with a new atlas of Swansea c.1300 and 3D visualisations of witness routes and sightlines [**3.1**]. The GIS mapping work was undertaken at Queen's University Belfast, led by project Co-Investigator Keith Lilley. Throughout, the research involved collaboration with partners in Swansea, including the Glamorgan Gwent Archaeological Trust, Swansea Museum, and West Glamorgan Archives. The project significantly advanced scholarly understanding of

the lost medieval urban environment of Swansea and developed new insights into medieval spatial practices and imaginaries, as well as innovative and transferable digital tools [**3.2**]. This research was expanded in a special issue of the *Journal of Medieval History*: 'Power, Identity and Miracles on a Medieval Frontier' (later also published as a book), including articles by Clarke and Webster. The focus of the volume broadened to recover the cultural, political and religious landscape of the medieval March of Wales (border region) more widely [**3.2**]. Together, Clarke's research on modern management of mediaeval land in Swansea (and Chester) underpinned her new research monograph [**3.3**, **3.4**].

A further AHRC grant for Follow-on Funding for Impact and Engagement (AH/P013600/1) supported the development of the 'City Witness' research into the St Thomas Way: a new heritage route from Swansea to Hereford, inspired by the pilgrimage of William Cragh to the shrine of St Thomas, after his miraculous revival. Based on a central partnership with Hereford Cathedral, the St Thomas Way built on the 'City Witness' research to tell the story of the medieval March of Wales – today largely a lost / unknown cultural and imaginative geography, which spans multiple local government areas across both England and Wales – through thirteen key locations, curated walks, and a suite of bespoke, immersive multimedia content for each site. The project also involved a collaboration with an Artist in Residence, leading to a touring exhibition which reflected on themes of place, mapping, pilgrimage and identity; and a partnership with Google, including the loan of a StreetView 360° camera and the development of virtual tour content for Google Maps. Work on the St Thomas Way has itself folded back into new research, including the volume *The St Thomas Way and the Medieval March of Wales: Exploring Place, Heritage, Pilgrimage* [**3.5**].

3. References to the research

3.1. http://www.medievalswansea.ac.uk (Clarke, Webster and others, 2014)

3.2. Clarke, ed., 'Power, Identity and Miracles on a Medieval Frontier', Special Issue, *Journal of Medieval History* 41 (2015), including:

- Clarke, 'Witnessing History: Perspectives on Medieval Swansea and its Cultural Contexts' (introduction). https://doi.org/10.1080/03044181.2015.1048086

- Clarke, 'Place, identity and performance: spatial practices and social proxies in medieval Swansea'. https://doi.org/10.1080/03044181.2015.1048089

- Webster, 'Mediating memory: recalling and recording the miracles of St Thomas Cantilupe'. https://doi.org/10.1080/03044181.2015.1048977

(also published as a book in the Routledge 'Special Issues as Books' series, 2016). Available on request.

3.3 Clarke, *Medieval Cityscapes Today* (short monograph), (Arc Humanities Press, March 2019, 'Past Imperfect' series). Available on request.

3.4. Invited presentations and conference keynotes (Clarke), including (sample):

- 'You are here: medieval heritage and the modern city' (Keynote lecture, Digital Heritage 2014: 'Digital Communities in Action' conference, University of York)

- 'Place Machines: memory, imagination and the medieval city' (Denys Hay Lecture, 2016, University of Edinburgh)

- 'Seeing the Invisible City: Medieval to Modern' (Plenary lecture, 'Lost and Transformed Cities: A Digital Perspective' conference, 2016, University of Lisbon)

3.5 Clarke, ed., *Place, Heritage, Pilgrimage: The St Thomas Way and the Medieval March of Wales (edited collection of essays)*, (April 2020) (Arc Humanities Press, inaugural volume in the 'Medieval Places and Spaces' series). Available on request. Including:

- Clarke, 'Re-Making Medieval Pilgrimage' (introduction) and 'Place, Time, and the St Thomas Way: An Experiment in Five Itineraries'

Funding:

AHRC Research Grant 'City Witness: Place and Perspective in Medieval Swansea' (AH/J008915/1, PI Clarke, £285,000 FEC, 2013-14)

4. Details of the impact

1. Public interpretation / Cultural impact

The 'City Witness' website targeted multiple user constituencies, including local communities and visitors to the city, with multimedia content including maps, reconstruction fly-through videos and a game, with a total of 135,744 visits by November 2018, and a year-on-year increase [**5.1**]. The project also produced a major exhibition at **Swansea Museum** (summer 2014, approximately 22,000 visitors), which connected the modern city with its (largely invisible) medieval heritage, allowed the Museum to display and interpret medieval collections usually held in storage, and included events for local people [**5.4**].

The AHRC grant for Follow-on Funding for Impact and Engagement (AH/P013600/1) supported the development of the 'City Witness' research into the St Thomas Way. **The St Thomas Way heritage tourism route** has transformed public understanding of the medieval March of Wales, and enriched heritage engagement at 13 sites and with multiple local communities along the route. The interactive map had 2,472 unique users from July 2018 – November 2018 and continues to attract visitors [**5.1**]. A day of launch events at Hereford Cathedral on 7 July 2018 included living history, mini-lectures, family activities and a reception (attended by approximately 250 people) for communities and stakeholders along the route. 99 feedback cards were collected, with highlights including visitors having learned about 'the cultural history of the Marches', 'William Cragh's story and St Thomas', 'the relevance of pilgrimage for today', 'the medieval period is alive – and palpable', 'the hidden gems [on the route] are worth finding!' [**5.6**].

With funding from the University of Southampton's Public Engagement with Research Unit, the St Thomas Way included a collaboration with an **Artist in Residence, Michelle Rumney**. Her art exhibition, 'Re-Making Maps of the Mind: Medieval and Modern Journeys', is inspired by the project research, and toured locations along the St Thomas Way and beyond. It draws upon a medieval practice whereby a person who needed help was measured using a piece of string or thread, which was placed inside a candle used in prayer [**5.5**]. Host venues to July 2019 included Hereford Cathedral, Abergavenny Priory, St Mary's Church Swansea, St Illtud's Church (with Heritage Centre) Llantwit Major, Ewenny Priory, Newport Cathedral, Margam Abbey, Caerphilly Castle, and Lighthouse (Poole Arts Centre), with the exhibition viewed by an estimated 1400 people at Poole and Swansea alone [**5.5**]. Public art workshops that engage participants creatively with themes of place, mapping and pilgrimage have been held at several host venues and attended by 149 people. This exhibition helped visitors connect with the past and practices of pilgrimage. The Chancellor of Hereford Cathedral described how 'powerfully affecting' it was to see many people wanting to partake in the measuring and leaving reflections at the site. He described it as 'instructing' to the cathedral in terms of facilitating 'meaningful physical engagement' with the shrine [**5.7**].

An example of how Hereford Cathedral has built on the project includes working with the **Hereford College of Arts** to produce a public exhibition ('The Way', 23 October – 4 November 2019). Over 200 people (students) spent time in the cathedral and visited locations on the St Thomas Way, developing pieces of design, music and performing arts in response to the concept of modern-day pilgrimage. Darren Williams, Course Leader at Hereford College of Arts, said: 'This project has enabled our students to engage with a theme they knew very little about beforehand. They have been able to develop their knowledge and appreciation of the subject and discover its benefits in the 21st century, particularly in terms of wellbeing.' [**5.9**]

Through Michelle Romney, the St Thomas Way also partnered with Google, with a special loan of a Google StreetView 360° camera. Michelle produced virtual tours of sites and walking routes on the Way, which are now available in a St Thomas Way feature on **Google Maps**, which received 947,534 visits by July 2020 [**5.5**].

The projects have featured in a wide range of local and national media coverage (print, online and broadcast). Both projects have attracted active engagement on social media: The @StThomasWay Twitter account has a steadily growing number of followers (1035 in December 2020) including many businesses, community groups and heritage/tourism organisations. Using methodologies developed by the 'City Witness' project for recovering and interpreting lost historic environments, Clarke advised IWC Media for the 'Norman Winchester' episode (21st April 2018) of the primetime **Channel 4** series 'Britain's Most Historic Towns'. The episode script

explained 'Using Catherine's research, for the first time in centuries we can reveal what William's Palace would have looked like', including a digital visualisation and extended interview. It attracted 1,230,000 viewers, exceeding average ratings for a show in its timeslot [**5.2**].

Through the success of the project led to Clarke's involvement in the working group chaired by Lord Cormack at the House of Lords, which developed the national 'Year of English Cathedrals' strategy/programme for 2020. It included the launch of several walks to rediscover pilgrimage routes. This nationwide celebration is inspired by several significant anniversaries, including the 800th anniversary of the consecration of the pilgrimage shrine of St Thomas Becket. Becket gave his last sermon at Southwark Cathedral before walking to Canterbury. An example of how the St Thomas Way project influenced these commemorations was that Rumney was commissioned to create an installation, based on her measuring practice, in Southwark Cathedral during Lent 2020. Although curtailed by the Covid-19 crisis, it was visited by 5,100 people in March, and the evening launch accompanied by candlelight and mediaeval chant attracted over 180 people. Thus, the St Thomas Way project has had an enduring effect on both Rumney's practice and career and the interpretation of pilgrimage heritage [**5.10**].

2. Place-making, urban regeneration and local development

The 'City Witness' project specifically aimed to use new research to facilitate regeneration and development in **Swansea city centre**: an area disconnected from its medieval heritage since WW2, facing economic and social challenges, and targeted for development through EU Convergence funding. The 'City Witness' research project was devised in partnership with the City and County of Swansea as part of their strategy to develop a distinct identity for the city centre as the 'Castle Quarter'. The project developed a new interactive tour of medieval Swansea, linked to a pavement marker trail (with match funding from Swansea Council), drawing visitors into the city centre and advancing the Council's 'Castle Quarter' strategy. Clarke also advised on new interpretation for **Swansea Castle** by a commercial company, helping to promote and realise the potential of the castle ruins as a heritage/tourism asset. After the 'City Witness' exhibition launch, Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Nick Bradley, told the BBC: 'The relevance of heritage tourism can't be underestimated. There's a major appetite for it and exhibitions of this type show we're keeping pace with demand here in Swansea' [**5.4**].

The St Thomas Way touring art exhibition has helped facilitate arts and cultural access local communities along the route between Swansea and Hereford, developing the potential of local churches and heritage sites – often in under-served rural locations or disadvantaged urban settings – as cultural centres [**5.5**].

3. Tourism capacity-building and regional development

The St Thomas Way project aims developed out of tourism opportunities/challenges identified in Swansea and in regional policy/strategy statements across England and Wales, including: the need to embed Swansea more robustly in heritage routes, the aim to develop 'faith tourism' and emphasis on 'sense of place' (Visit Wales Cultural Tourism Action Plan, 2012; Wales Faith Tourism Action Plan, 2013), and to increase overnight stays in the region (Herefordshire Tourism Strategy). The St Thomas Way heritage route aimed to release the under-exploited potential of smaller local sites (e.g. parish churches and unstaffed heritage sites) as heritage tourism assets, by linking well-established tourism destinations (e.g. Caerphilly Castle or Hereford Cathedral) with little-known locations such as Patrishow or Llancarfan, through the story of the medieval March of Wales and William Cragh's pilgrimage. A feature in the *Daily Telegraph* (circulation: 363,183) travel section, 'Who needs the Camino de Santiago when you can hike through South Wales?' responded positively to this strategy, commenting that 'in these small, unspoiled towns along the St Thomas Way you can capture something of the sounds, smells and rhythms of medieval life' and promoting the route as a visitor attraction [**5.2**]. Organisations across the region have welcomed the Way as a new tourism initiative, with Eat Sleep Live Herefordshire tweeting that 'this whole route is such a wonderful new attraction for walkers' [**5.1**]. This enthusiasm has been sustained, with the *Daily Telegraph* and Eat Sleep Live Herefordshire again featuring the St Thomas Way in March 2019 and December 2019 respectively. The **British Pilgrimage Trust** has recognised the route by distributing an initial run of 10,000 brochures at sites along it and creating a page for the St Thomas Way on their site, including GPS exchange format files for all the walking routes [**5.1**]. Through a collaboration with Mumbles Brewery, St Thomas Way ale – labelled with a QR code link to the website, route map,

and project information – continues to be sold in outlets along the route, as a further promotional/outreach strategy [**5.3**]. The St Thomas Way was also to play a central role in a major programme of events planned at Hereford Cathedral in 2020, to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the canonisation of St Thomas, offering a multiplier effect. Covid disrupted some of these efforts, but the Cathedral successfully moved an Exhibition on 'The Two Thomases: The Lives and Deaths of St Thomas Becket and St Thomas Cantilupe' (27 July 2020 - 2 January 2021) online.

4. Partnerships and economic impacts

A key commercial partnership delivering significant and wide-reaching economic impact was with digital learning developer **Make Sense** which produced the 'City Witness' online game. Make Sense described the collaboration with the 'City Witness' research team as 'pioneering', helping them to develop and market 'Elucidat', a new proprietary authoring tool. It has been exhibited at international trade fairs, using 'City Witness' initially as a proof of concept, and is now a major product and spin-off business. Elucidat's website states that 17,300000, people all over the world are already benefiting from learning created with Elucidat' (December 2020) via the company's work developing e-learning for large companies and organisations. A collaboration with **Mumbles Brewery** (a micro-brewery in Swansea) has led to a new commercial product for the company: St Thomas Way ale. This new product, together with the network of cross-regional links offered by the St Thomas Way project, has enabled Mumbles Brewery to reach new stockists far beyond their core market of Swansea and its immediate environs, including the refectory at Hereford Cathedral [**5.3**].

5. Influence on policy and practice

The 'City Witness' project featured as a full-page case study in the **AHRC** Impact Report 2014-15 to the Department of Business, Innovation & Skills [**5.11**], contributing to public policy formation on UK research funding. The combined project research, engagement and impact have also received awards including the silver medal for **Public Engagement in the International Digital Humanities Awards** 2014, and was a finalist in the 2016 **National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement Awards**, modelling best practice between HEI and non-HEI partners in the delivery of impacts [**5.8**].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Online and Social Media Report: User statistics and data for City Witness website (www.medievalswansea.ac.uk) and The St Thomas Way heritage tourism route (https://thomasway.ac.uk/explore-the-way) social media statistics and engagement evidence.
5.2 Media Report: Print, online and broadcast media coverage, including *The Guardian*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Western Mail*, *South Wales Evening Post*, BBC Wales News, BBC Online, BBC Radio Three, *History Today* etc; Channel Four 'Britain's Most Historic Towns' production, transmission and engagement details.
5.3 Commercial Partners Report: Testimonial from Make Sense on development/economic impact of 'Elucidat' authoring tool (including 'pioneering' and 'flagship' quotes); Elucidat website with statistics; Testimonial and evidence from Mumbles Brewery on St Thomas Way ale commercial impact.
5.4 Swansea Interpretation and Regeneration Report: Pavement Marker Trail brochure, photos and online links; Swansea Museum exhibition statistics; Swansea Council support, funding and collaboration; Use / credits in commercial and other heritage interpretation materials.
5.5 Art Project / Exhibition Report: Photos, information and online links; Tour locations and dates; Sample workshop flyer; sample visitor numbers (Poole Lighthouse); sample host testimonials (Merthyr Tydfil); Google StreetView partnership link and statistics.
5.6 St Thomas Way Launch Report: Event flyer; Film (YouTube link) and photos; Feedback cards photo.
5.7 Key Partner Testimonials Report: Hereford Cathedral; Merthyr Tydfil.
5.8 Impact on Policy and Practice Report: AHRC Report for Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (2015); Awards evidence.
5.9 Press Release, 'HCA Students Show 'THE WAY' at Hereford Cathedral', 23rd October 2019.
5.10 Southwark Cathedral Correspondence.
5.11 https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/project-reports-and-reviews/the-impact-of-ahrc-research/2014-2015