

<b>Institution: Leeds Beckett University</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment: History</b>		
<b>Title of case study: Our Criminal Ancestors</b>		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2005-19		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Professor Heather Shore	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Professor of Social History	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2005-19
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2013-19		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p><i>Our Criminal Ancestors</i> established a professional network of curators and archivists working in the crime field, which has modified some of the whiggish histories of crime that have become embedded in heritage and public history accounts. It also broadened the resources available to family historians who constitute the largest ‘consumer’ group for both heritage sites and archives, through collaboration with heritage partners. The project helped professional communities to develop their curatorial practice, specifically in Ripon and Stockton-on-Tees. It also trained amateur users in archival sources and methods for them to use in their own family research.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The case-study builds on Shore’s extensive body of work and international reputation in crime history, including her work on juvenile offenders (3.1), and her more recent research into the social and cultural history of crime from the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries (3.3, 3.4, 3.5). A key theme which has run throughout this work has been to reveal the ‘experience’ and ‘agency’ of offenders. This has been particularly pronounced in her co-authored book on juvenile offenders, <i>Young Criminal Lives</i> (3.5), which used genealogical and family history sources and methodologies to trace young offenders’ life-courses. A key finding in this project was that the majority of young offenders historically had fleeting brushes with the criminal justice system. Most went on to lead ‘normal’, non-criminal lives, as far as the records can determine. The public discourses of juvenile criminality, however, emphasise recidivism not desistance, as Shore emphasised in a <a href="#">Home Office talk</a> (3.4) about youth crime in 2015 and through her membership of the History and Policy/Ministry of Justice working group.</p> <p>This body of research informed Shore’s desire to work with research practitioners, such as curators and archivists, and with the public who ‘consume’ historical research via their research into family histories. The standard story of crime history that is told via heritage sites is one which speaks to a presumption of continuing progress in the criminal justice system – the past is presented as unnecessarily violent (capital and corporal punishment stories predominate in the public history sites), as unjust to individuals (since individual stories are the route by which the history is told in public history sites) and are often sensationalist in their focus (for example, gallows stories, transportation stories), with the unintended consequence that empathy for the criminal and no accounts of victims is a common trait. The sense that ‘things are better now’ is a story that Shore’s research demonstrates should be told in more nuanced ways.</p> <p>Shore’s concern with young criminal lives and the way they are narrated in public history contexts led to two successful applications for Research Council UK grants: <i>Our Criminal Past</i>:</p>		

*Caring for our Future* (AHRC, 2013); and *Our Criminal Past: Our Criminal Ancestors* (AHRC follow-on funding, 2017). The professional networking activities which were part of the first *Our Criminal Past* project evolved from relationships that Shore had established as a result of her academic work and leadership in the field of criminal justice history. The *Our Criminal Past* research network (with Professor Helen Johnston, Hull) built on existing networks and developed new heritage contacts with the successful aim of modifying some elements of curatorial practice in sharing the history of crime for heritage audiences. Shore joined the Committee of the Crime and Punishment Collections Network as Secretary from 2015, moving to Vice-Chair in 2018, and was involved in a successful bid to the [Arts Council's Museums Resilience Fund](#) (2017-8) aimed at expanding the network and growing both knowledge exchange and broader engagement with the implications of crime history and with crime history's usefulness to current researchers.

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

3.1 Shore, H. (1999; 2002), *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early-Nineteenth-Century London*. London: Boydell Press.

3.2 Johnston, H. and Shore, H. (2015), 'Special Edition: Our Criminal Past – Caring for the Future', special edition, introduction written by Johnston and Shore (eds), *Law, Crime and History*, 5/1, pp. 5-11. <http://www.lawcrimehistory.org/hjournal2015Vo5p1.html>.

3.3 Shore, H. (2015), *London's Criminal Underworlds, c. 1720 – c. 1930: A Social and Cultural History*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

3.4 Shore, H. (2015), 'Youth gangs in Victorian and Edwardian London', *History & Policy / Home Office Seminar Series*, <http://www.historyandpolicy.org/seminars/seminar/home-office-series-2015>.

3.5 Godfrey, B., Cox, P., Shore, H. and Alker, Z. (2017), *Young Criminal Lives: Life Course and Life Chances from 1850*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The formal publications listed here are **significant** because of the sustained challenge they offer to a Whig view of the history of crime; they are **original** because they are based on archival research. Their **rigour** is evidenced by the fact that they have each been through a sustained process of peer review. Her invitation to the Home Office as part of its History and Policy series attests to Shore's reputation as a major figure in the historiography of crime.

#### Details of research grants:

1.

Heather Shore, with Helen Johnston (CI).  
'Our Criminal Past; Caring for the Future', Research Networking Grant  
Arts and Humanities Research Council  
March 2013 – March 2014  
£24,630 (FEC £30,541), with Dr Helen Johnston (CI).

2.

Helen Johnston, with Heather Shore (CI)  
'Our Criminal Past: Our Criminal Ancestors', Follow on Funding for Impact and Engagement  
Arts and Humanities Research Council  
May 2017 - Apr 2018.  
£80,163 (approx, £100,000 FEC)

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

#### Benefiting Curatorial Practice:

Our Criminal Ancestors' first major impact was to successfully bring together academics from a range of disciplines (history, criminology, education, law, cultural studies) with professionals

working in museums, archives and heritage sites in order to enhance greater collaboration over the preservation, presentation and dissemination of Britain's criminal past. This included a number of local and national partners, including the National Justice Museum, the National Archives, Preston Park Museum (Stockton-on-Tees) and Ripon Museums Trust. As a result of sharing new academic research, the project's curatorial partners had improved skills in research and exhibition display. This included advanced skills in object handling and interpretation of the material culture of crime, as the following examples illustrate:

- I. A public talk from Shore on the history behind 'The Real Artful Dodgers' at Ripon Law and Order Museum in February 2018, led to a relationship between Our Criminal Ancestors and the Curator for Ripon Museums Trust. The team contributed research to interpretation boards for the exhibition Rogues and Vagabonds (June – December 2019) at the Ripon Law and Order Museum. This exhibition, in sharing connected stories of historical and contemporary homelessness, benefitted greatly from this collaborative approach, which ensured that it was 'rooted in accurate and sound historical research' and was positively assessed by Arts Council England as 'insightful' and 'distinctive' (5.1).
- II. From 2014 Shore built a collaborative partnership with Preston Park Museum & Grounds. She advised the collections team on the criminal justice objects held within their collection and their potential for public engagement. This has helped the collections team 'get the most out of the collection and ... look further into the wider context of why people committed crimes' by providing fuller contextual understanding of the social, political and economic history of Stockton-on-Tees and the Tees Valley area (5.2).
- III. The project has further enhanced the research skills of heritage practitioners. In January 2015 Shore and Johnston published a special edition of *Law, Crime and Society*, which includes an [article by an assistant curator Dorian Knight](#), at Bishop's Stortford Museum, Essex (5.3). In April 2014 [a blog by Charlotte Barron](#), former curator at the Preston Park Museum, was published on the website (5.4), evidence of the ways in which the project has built the professional research skills of members of its target audience.

Our Criminal Ancestors' emphasis on collaborative practice was recognised by its inclusion as a case-study in the revised [Archives and Higher Education Collaborative Guidance issued in 2018. The guidance was jointly created by History UK and Higher Education Archive Programme \(HEAP\), and shares guidance on how collaborative projects have developed and resulted in mutual benefits for the organisations involved \(5.5\).](#)

#### **Developing the Research Skills of Family Historians:**

Our Criminal Ancestors' second major impact was to increase the level of experience and understanding of members of the public interested in researching their familial criminal ancestry through a series of research skills workshops delivered between 2017 and 2019.

In 2017, three public workshops, attracting almost 100 participants, were held at the Hull History Centre during its City of Culture year. The events on 15 July 2017 and 23 September 2017 achieved a 25% increase in footfall from members of the public at the History Centre and that on 21 October more than doubled it (5.6).

These events, plus a fourth workshop at Ripon Museums in May 2019, developed researchers' skills and enhanced their knowledge and understanding of crime history. 100% of respondents to the feedback questionnaire agreed that they had learned new knowledge through their participation, 91% changed their understanding of criminal ancestry, and 90% were inspired to learn more about the history of crime. Many wrote that they would follow-up their attendance by drawing upon Our Criminal Ancestors' online resources. A number of individuals attended multiple events and gave positive feedback as to how much the events positively impacted upon their skills in research and analysis (5.7; 5.8).

A source-guide was created to provide 'an excellent introduction and explanation for (mostly) family historians engaging with often daunting legal and penal records for the first time'. Copies have been made available to the public at Hull History Centre, Ripon Law and Order Museums, Bradford Police Museum and Northallerton Archives (5.6; 5.9). This has been supplemented by free resources on the project website (<https://ourcriminalancestors.org/>). These include co-authored blog posts between the project team, curators and members of the public and an

interactive map, which contains user-pinned stories of criminal ancestry relating to juvenile crime and women criminals during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (5.10).

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

- 5.1 Testimonial from Leah Mellors, Curator at the Ripon Prison, Workhouse and Courtroom Museum, 18 February 2020.
- 5.2 Testimonial from Christine Hutchinson, Collections Officer, Preston Park Museum, 21 February 2018.
- 5.3 Knight, D. (2015), 'On the Beat: Stories from 1914-1918: A Fresh Approach to Interpreting Crime History at Bishop's Stortford Museum', *Law, Crime and History*, 5/1, pp. 117-129.
- 5.4 Barron, C. (11 April 2014), 'Stockton's Criminal Past: Promoting a Museum's Criminal History Collection', Our Criminal Ancestors, <https://ourcriminalancestors.org/2014/04/stocktons-criminal-past-promoting-a-museums-criminal-history-collection/>.
- 5.5 The National Archives and History UK (2018), 'A Guide to Collaboration for Archives and Higher Education': <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/archives/2018-edition-archive-and-he-guidance-all-sections-combined-ci-final.pdf>.
- 5.6 Testimonial from Martin Taylor, City Archivist, Hull History Centre, 23 April 2020.
- 5.7 Feedback and questionnaire results from the 'Our Criminal Ancestors' workshops, Hull History Centre, 15 July 2017, 23 September 2017, 21 October 2017.
- 5.8 Feedback and questionnaire results from the 'Our Criminal Ancestors' workshop, Ripon Prison, Workhouse and Courtroom Museum, 11 May 2019.
- 5.9 Our Criminal Ancestors (2018), Sources for Researching Your Criminal Past: An introduction to the criminal justice system and material held at the Hull History Centre and the East Riding of Yorkshire Archives: <https://ourcriminalancestors.org/source-guide-for-hull-and-east-riding-sources-for-researching-your-criminal-past/>
- 5.10 Historypin (2018), 'OurCriminalAncestors', <https://www.historypin.org/en/person/94538>.