

<b>Institution:</b> University of Huddersfield		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 27 English Language & Literature		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Discovering Ted Hughes's Yorkshire		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> September 2015 to present.		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Dr Steve Ely	Senior Lecturer in Creative Writing	September 2015 – present
Dr James Underwood	Senior Lecturer, English Literature	July 2016 – present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> September 2015 – December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Research by Dr Steve Ely at the University of Huddersfield led to the creation of the Hughes Network (THN) in March 2016. The THN is a public-facing research centre focused on the writings of Hughes with a particular brief to unite previously isolated organisations that were working to promote Hughes's legacy in their respective localities and to encourage collaboration and partnership working. From his appointment in July 2016, the research of Dr James Underwood also informed the work of the THN. The THN brought together key stakeholders to form the Discovering Ted Hughes's Yorkshire Consortium in 2017, which includes: Calderdale and Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Councils, Hebden Royd Town Council, and Pattrington Parish Council; The Elmet Trust; and The Ted Hughes Project (South Yorkshire). For these beneficiaries, the research of the THN has: shaped organisational operations and facilitated cross-organisational collaboration; increased knowledge and understandings of Hughes; engaged culturally marginalised groups within their constituencies; and developed cultural offerings for local communities and tourists.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>The poetry of Hughes (1930-1998), an internationally significant cultural figure and former Poet Laureate, is steeped in his Yorkshire roots. Although a number of Yorkshire-based organisations — including local authorities, charities and community groups — had recognised this and were working in different ways to promote Hughes's legacy in their areas, these groups were working locally and in isolation, often without an overarching vision and/or leadership.</p> <p>The Ted Hughes Network (THN) consolidated critical and creative research related to Hughes and contemporary poetry, as well as skills in public engagement within the Subject Area. It received generous funding from the University Research Fund (£108,254) as a centre dedicated to research on Hughes and his contemporaries. In consultation with stakeholders it became clear that there were two problems which urgently needed addressing. The first was that the communities in Hughes's three key Yorkshire locations (the <b>Upper Calder Valley</b> in <b>West Yorkshire</b>, the <b>Mexborough</b> area in <b>South Yorkshire</b> and <b>Pattrington</b> in <b>East Yorkshire</b>) had limited or deficient knowledge and understanding of the role their area had played in the development of a major international writer. The second was that, even in areas like the Upper Calder Valley where the Hughes story was more established, a number of myths and inaccuracies had taken hold distorting local knowledge and understanding of Hughes.</p> <p>In response to these, Ely considers the question of Hughes's 'Yorkshireness' in his article 'Hughes's Yorkshire' [3.1], exploring the ways in which the county not only formed Hughes as a man and an artist, but also the ways in which he retained his actual and imaginative links with it. 'The importance of Edna Wholey to the poetic development of Ted Hughes' [3.2] specifically explores the impact of Crookhill Park in South Yorkshire on Hughes's development. 'The Parochial Courage of Ted Hughes' [3.3] tackles a particularly strong local perception: that the trajectory of Hughes's life and career saw him abandon his roots in favour of more 'elite' circles. Ely does so by using Patrick Kavanagh's distinction between 'parochialism' and 'provincialism' to argue that Hughes remained a fundamentally 'parochial' writer, i.e. one who understood the social and artistic significance of his non-metropolitan background.</p> <p>Underwood's 'Mayday on Holderness: Ted Hughes, National Service, and East Yorkshire' [3.5] is the first publication to comprehensively research the poet's time in Pattrington, where he completed National Service. This period is barely covered in the biographies and many residents of the village had little to no knowledge of the connection. Underwood has interviewed residents, researched the archive, and explored the landscape in order to produce an accurate record. Ely</p>		

and Underwood also organised a conference, *Ted Hughes and Place*, in June 2017, which brought international scholars to Huddersfield, and included events that brought stakeholders and their communities into dialogue with these scholars. A number of significant contributions were expanded for publication in Underwood's 2018 special issue of the *Ted Hughes Society Journal* [3.6], including essays focusing on Yorkshire in an Open Access issue available to members of stakeholder groups.

Ely has also researched Hughes's creativity and his collaborations with artists. The first output from this, 'A Prologue to *Capriccio*' explores Hughes's collaboration with Leonard Baskin [3.4]. Ely's work on creativity and collaboration, alongside his work on place, has enabled him to engage marginalised audiences in a way that is both research-led and influenced by Hughes's creative practice and thematic interests.

This body of research has established the THN as a source of extensive and reliable information about Hughes's work, and life in Yorkshire. THN staff are frequently consulted and commissioned to share their expertise. Ely has appeared on Radio 3 (*The Echo Chamber*, 18 April 2017) to discuss the importance of Mexborough to Hughes's poetic formation and the impact of his research in South Yorkshire more generally. Ely was featured in David Cohen's 2016 documentary about Hughes, *Dreamtime*, and has given talks on Hughes and Yorkshire at the University of Lille and several literary festivals, including Blenheim, Oxford and Huddersfield. Underwood was interviewed by BBC Radio Leeds at the launch of an exhibition of Hughes's work at Heritage Quay, Huddersfield (2018).

### 3. References to the research

[3.1] Steve Ely, '[Hughes's Yorkshire](#)', in Terry Gifford (ed.), *Ted Hughes in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018). Indicators of 2\*+ quality: Peer-reviewed; published in CUP's 'In Context' series. ISBN 9781108425551 [can be supplied on request]

[3.2] Steve Ely, '[The importance of Edna Wholey to the poetic development of Ted Hughes](#)', *Ted Hughes Society Journal*, 5:1 (2016). Indicators of 2\*+ quality: peer-reviewed; Leading international journal research on Hughes and his contemporaries, established 2011. [can be supplied on request]

[3.3] Steve Ely, '[The Parochial Courage of Ted Hughes](#)', *Ted Hughes Society Journal*, 6:2 (2017). Indicators of 2\*+ quality: Peer-reviewed; cited in Hélie, C., *No Dialect Please, You're a Poet* (Routledge, 2019).

[3.4] Steve Ely, '[A Prologue to Capriccio](#)', *Ted Hughes Society Journal*, 9:1 (2020). Indicators of 2\*+ quality: Peer-reviewed, leading international journal.

[3.5] James Underwood, '[Mayday on Holderness](#): Ted Hughes, National Service, and East Yorkshire', *Ted Hughes Society Journal*, 6:2 (2017): Indicators of 2\*+ quality: peer-reviewed, leading international journal.

[3.6] James Underwood (ed.), '[Ted Hughes and Place](#)', Special Issue of the *Ted Hughes Society Journal*, 7:1. (2018): Indicators of 2\*+ quality: A peer-reviewed issue with research of seven scholars chosen from the 2017 international conference, 'Ted Hughes and Place'. Cited in H. Clark, *Red Comet* (2020).

### 4. Details of the impact

The creation of the THN enables Yorkshire's communities to benefit from greater knowledge and understanding of their heritage in relation to Hughes, and has strengthened Yorkshire-based organisations delivering cultural provision through the development of collaborations that have increased their collective capacity to deliver high quality cultural experiences within their communities.

The THN under the leadership of Ely and Underwood formalised these collaborations by establishing a consortium of organisations called the 'Discovering Ted Hughes's Yorkshire' Consortium. This consortium has enabled us to maximise the impact of our research. As the Consortium's work has developed and as organisations have seen its potential, it has grown in size. The main stakeholders represented are: **Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council** (CMBC): population 210,000; **Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council** (DMBC) and **Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust** (DLCT): population 302,000; **Hebden Royd Town Council** (HRTC): population 10,000; **Patrington Parish Council** (PCC): population 2,000; **The**

**Elmet Trust (ET):** Mytholmroyd-based charity which promotes Hughes's work and preserves his birthplace; **The Ted Hughes Project (South Yorkshire) (THP(SY)):** Mexborough-based community group which promotes Hughes's work and creativity.

Through our leadership of this consortium, the **THN** has achieved these impacts:

### **Shaping stakeholders' operations & facilitating collaboration**

The **THN** has brought stakeholders together, enabling collaborative working and shaping how stakeholders operate. CMBC, HRTC, DMBC, and PCC have all identified the heritage of Hughes in their respective areas as a means of enhancing their tourism offer, stimulating the local economy, and enhancing the cultural experience of residents, the primary beneficiaries [5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5]. The Tourism Officer of CMBC views the project as an important contribution to the Council's mission to be 'The Best Borough in the North' [5.1], whilst the mayor of Hebden Royd has identified Hughes-focused activities as a means to 'enrich our cultural offer and contribute to economic regeneration in Mytholmroyd, an area very badly affected by catastrophic floods in 2015' [5.3]. The Chief Executive of Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust (DLCT) sees the collaborative activities of the THN as meeting their organisational priority of, 'shaping our offer so that it might provide opportunities for promoting mental and physical health by means of outdoor activity and by engaging with creativity' [5.2]. The Treasurer & Membership Secretary of the Elmet Trust makes clear the importance of these partnerships: 'Before the Ted Hughes Network was formed, there was a danger we would not be able to fulfil our charitable aims'; but now 'because we are closely involved in bigger, more ambitious projects, we are in a significantly stronger position' [5.5]. In short, the THN has positioned Hughes as integral to the leisure and culture operations of local authorities collectively representing several hundred thousand people.

### **Increasing knowledge and understanding of Hughes's work and legacy**

In their testimonials our Consortium partners comment on how their knowledge and understanding of Hughes's work has been enhanced as a result of working with us. For example, the Treasurer & Membership Secretary of the Elmet Trust [5.5] describes how Ely's 'reliable' and 'valuable' research, especially 'Hughes's Yorkshire' [3.1] and the 'Parochial Courage of Ted Hughes' [3.5], helped them challenge 'misperceptions and myths' and to articulate to local people the 'positive impact' West Yorkshire had on Hughes's formation. The Chief Executive of Doncaster Culture and Leisure Trust, comments that Ely's 'The Importance of Edna Wholey to the Poetic Formation of Ted Hughes' [3.2] and other research 'alerted us to the importance of Hughes's links with Crookhill (which we were not previously aware of)', leading this Trust to reshape their plans for redeveloping the site to include a substantial Hughesian element. In East Yorkshire, awareness of Hughes's links with Patrington was almost non-existent. Following Underwood's public talk, 100% of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that the event was educational and that they learned something new about Hughes; only 3% did not feel that they had learned something new about their community [5.4]. The Creative Producer of the THP(SY) comments that Ely's research has inspired 'local people with the example of Hughes's writing and the newly revealed knowledge of the importance of his South Yorkshire period', this being, 'the wedge required to open community receptivity to actively engaging more widely with poetry and the arts' in the Mexborough area [5.6].

### **Developing stimuli to place-making, cultural tourism and the quality of the tourist experience**

The increased knowledge and understanding referred to above has been the key to developing wider impact. To date, the major focus and work of the **Ted Hughes Network**, through the consortium, has been the development of a Yorkshire-wide Ted Hughes Literary & Heritage trails joined together under the banner 'Discovering Ted Hughes's Yorkshire'. Consortium members worked with Ely and Underwood to identify public footpaths and landscapes in their communities related to Hughes's work and identified in Ely and Underwood's research (2016-2017). Six maps, drawing directly from the underpinning research, featuring locations of Hughes's life and works in West, South, and East Yorkshire, were designed by the Yorkshire cartographer Christopher Goddard [5.8]. The maps enable local people to connect to and explore their local areas through Hughes's life and work. The 'Discovering Ted Hughes's Yorkshire' maps enhance each area's cultural offer and the potential to develop tourism. The Tourism Officer at Calderdale Council sees the trails as having the potential to contribute to its core aim to 'grow the economy...by increasing

tourist footfall in to the area and by contributing to place-making — helping to consolidate the brand of the Hebden Royd area as locus of art and creativity'. He also sees the trails as contributing 'to participants' mental and physical health and well-being through participation in creativity and walking in supportive group contexts' [5.1], which has become increasingly important during the COVID lockdowns which have been nearly continuous in the region since March 2020.

On the basis of similar reasoning, Hebden Royd Town Council agreed to fund the three West Yorkshire maps and interpretive signage with two grants totalling £9,800 (2018, 2019). As a result, the **THN** commissioned the three trail maps, and worked with local charity CROWS (Community Rights of Way Service) to make physical improvements to the routes, enhancing accessibility and health and safety (2019) [5.10]. The planned public activities to launch these trails (scheduled for May, 2020) had to be postponed due to the COVID pandemic, but will include: expert guided walks, six community creative writing workshops, and six Hughes/trail-related workshops in local schools. The HRTC Mayor comments that Ely & Underwood's research 'underpins a collaboration' that allows them to fulfil the Council's aims of 'being responsive to the needs of the community' and 'enhance the area to the benefit of all'. The Mayor anticipates that the programme, which is ready to commence when government guidance allows, 'will attract literary and other tourists to Hebden Royd, consolidating the area's reputation for being a hotbed of art and creativity and contributing to economic development.' [5.3].

DCLT has funded the two South Yorkshire maps that draw directly on Ely's research into the significance of Crookhill Park (currently a golf course) to Hughes's formation [3.1]. They have made the decision to place Hughes and his links to Crookhill at the heart of the site's redevelopment as a 'Community Hub' that will include restoration of the 'Pike' pond where Hughes fished as a teenager, and the setting of his seminal poem 'Pike'. In the spring of 2020 DCLT began the process of clearing out and landscaping the neglected pond. DCLT also plans to develop a children's Hughes Poetry Trail on this site and an education/performance space. DCLT Chief Executive comments that the project will develop Crookhill Park 'as a cultural and leisure attraction capable of engaging a much wider and more diverse public,' [5.2].

In October 2019, in Patrington, East Yorkshire, where Hughes completed National Service, Underwood presented the findings of his research into this little studied period of Hughes's life. [3.5]. This event generated an interest in further engaging with Hughes's work, including support for additional public events, and the design of a trail to celebrate the relationship with their community and the work of Hughes: one participant identified the need for 'more local publicity about Hughes and his time spent here. As a local girl of 64 years, I was unaware of Hughes's time here'. Another commented: 'a trail is a brilliant idea and incorporating the natural theme prevalent throughout his [Hughes's] work into the walk would be great' [5.4]. Through this event and further discussion with Consortium members (see below), the PCC joined the Consortium and supported the commissioning, printing and distribution of the East Yorkshire trail map, based on Underwood's research [3.5, 5.8].

The maps are available online. Post-Covid, printed copies will be placed in community venues including public libraries, community cafes and town halls/council offices. Copies will also be distributed to local schools. The Treasurer of CROWS has observed that even without the launch, 'the routes have been used and enjoyed by several local walking groups who have appreciated the descriptions provided in the walk leaflets' [maps] [5.10].

### **Engagement with under-engaged audiences leading to increased cultural participation**

Ely has used his research on Hughes, creativity, collaboration and place [3.1 & 3.4] to inspire creativity and collaboration and to increase cultural participation in Mexborough, which has areas in the 10th percentile of the most economically deprived areas in the UK (UK Index of Multiple Deprivations). THP(SY) in partnership with the **THN**, has secured Arts Council and other funding of between £30,000 and £40,000 per annum in every year from 2016 to 2019, which they have used to develop an annual literary festival: The Ted Hughes Poetry Festival. This runs ambitious community and school creative writing programmes and develops a distinctive strain of 'literature and landscape' events. The THP(SY) Creative Producer remarks that 'several thousand' people have attended THP(SY) events over the last few years, to hear readings and attend workshops by internationally significant writers including, 'Simon Armitage, Raymond Antrobus, Vahni Capildeo, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Zaffar Kunial, Andrew McMillan, Hollie McNeish, David Morley, Kim Moore and the rapper and performance artist Moor Mother' [5.6]. THP(SY) has also



established an imprint, 'The Wild West Press', rooted in Ely's research into Hughes's own small press work [3.4]. Its first publication in 2018, *Zi-Zi Taah: The Song of the Willow Tit* is a collaboration comprising poems by Ely and illustrations by the artist, 'PR'. *Zi-Zi Taah* won a prestigious Michael Marks Award for PR's artwork in December 2018, providing a significant boost not only for the press on its debut publication, but shining a welcome spotlight on PR, a young and emerging artist. The Wild West Press has also published *One in, All in* an anthology of new poetry, including work by emerging and established poets, including Ely, Mike Garry, Helen Mort, and Ian McMillan, giving a boost in profile to the emerging writers. The book was launched at a live-streamed, and socially distanced reading (50 in attendance) at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield, as part of the Off-the-Shelf Festival of Books, on Friday 16th October.

*Write on Mexborough (WoM)*, facilitated from 2015-2018 by Ely and the THN draws upon Ely's research into the potential for Hughes's poetry to inspire a creative response [3.4]. Funded by Heritage Lottery and other funders, the WoM each year ran 15-20 fortnightly workshops annually with 15-20 participants in each cohort. This programme has showcased the work of participants in anthologies, literary journals, performance, and other creative outlets. Two participants have since had volumes of poetry published: Karl Riordan's *The Tattooist's Chair* (2017), and Mick Pettinger's *Just a kid from Cortonwood* (2019).

Participants in the group (identified here by their first names) have experienced the group's impact as transformational: former soldier Frank comments: 'when I wrote my first poem, I couldn't wait to read it out to people, and I'd never done that before'. Michael describes the lack of opportunity to engage with creative writing in Mexborough prior to the formation of the group. Paul notes how Ely had allowed group members to, 'develop, find and discover their own creativity' and that Hughes's poetry 'was like a flare, one of the main reasons I got into writing'. Angie points out the utility of the group as 'therapy' and described how her friends 'could not believe how well she had come on' during her time in the group. Barry was enthused by the way 'people were getting involved' and Lynne described the group as 'an inspirational opportunity, encouraging everybody to put pen to paper. Just write what you feel!'. [5.7]. Another participant, who suffers from severe mental health issues told Ely that 'This group has saved my life'. The current Creative Director of THP(SY) was originally one of the participants of *Write on Mexborough*. As a result of his participation, he was selected to take part in the 2017 British Council programme set in Germany: *Writers by Nature* as one of six young writers selected from across the UK. He is a current recipient of a Jerwood Bursary (2019). *Write on Mexborough* contributed directly to his professional success and to his ability to take on the role of Creative Director.

The development undergone by individuals involved in THP(SY) and its writing programme, WoM is evidence of the transformational nature of the impact of Ely's research in the South Yorkshire region facilitated through the THN. The Creative Director of THP(SY) writes that THP(SY) has 'generated a wide range of artistic, volunteering and leadership opportunities for local people', noting that several members of THP(SY) have, 'gone on to get new jobs or have otherwise developed their careers in the arts as a result of their experience volunteering for the THP(SY)'. He concludes by remarking that the THP(SY)'s success is 'based on the hard work and talent of its volunteers, but that none of this would have been possible without Ely's research and commitment' [5.6].

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Calderdale Council Testimonial Letter
- 5.2 DMBC Testimonial Letter
- 5.3 Hebden Royd TC Testimonial Letter
- 5.4 Evaluation Summary, Patrington
- 5.5 Elmet Trust Testimonial Letter
- 5.6 THPSY Testimonial Letter
- 5.7 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wnqQ6CRV9cg>
- 5.8 Discovering Ted Hughes Yorkshire Maps
- 5.9 Discovering Ted Hughes Yorkshire Launch publicity
- 5.10 CROWS Testimonial Letter