REF2021

Institution: University of Nottingham

Unit of Assessment: UoA 27 (English Language and Literature)

Title of case study: *Shropshire and Staffordshire place-names: unlocking the cultural and linguistic heritage of local landscapes for heritage practitioners, schools and communities*

Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013 – 2020

Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period employed by submitting HEI
John Baker	Research Fellow Associate Professor in Name-Studies	01/10/2005 – 30/09/2008; 19/10/2009 –
Jayne Carroll	Associate Professor in History of English	01/09/2009 –
Paul Cavill	Associate Professor in Early English	01/09/94 – 31/07/2020

Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014 – end 2020

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

1. Summary of the impact

Research by the Institute for Name-Studies (INS) at the University of Nottingham has unlocked the rich linguistic and cultural history of Shropshire and Staffordshire via specialist interpretation of the counties' place-names. This work has enhanced local heritage and educational provision, bringing communities into closer connection with their local environments and place-based histories. In providing the onomastic expertise that local heritage professionals and primary school teachers do not usually have, the INS has increased their capacity to respond to the challenges of recent funding cuts and new KS2 curriculum requirements. Through providing training and content for exhibitions, talks, and new educational resources, the INS has: i) enhanced regional heritage preservation and interpretation in Shropshire and Staffordshire by building organisational capacity and increasing public understanding of local history; ii) enhanced cross- and extra-curricular primary education in south Shropshire, addressing Ofsted's revised Education Inspection Framework (2019); iii) inspired new creative responses to the local Shropshire landscape in fiction for, and by, school children at a time of lockdown and national crisis.

2. Underpinning research

The 'Place-Names of Shropshire', a collaborative project led by the INS (with the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, University of Wales), was AHRC-funded from 2013 to 2016 (**F1**). Its main outputs were volumes 92, 95–6 (**P1–P3**) of the Survey of English Place-Names, one of the British Academy's landmark 'Academy Research Projects' intended to produce '*fundamental works of scholarship*'. These volumes provide original etymological analysis of many thousands of individual place-names, from field-, stream- and street-names to the names of villages, towns, and districts across southern Shropshire, including areas belonging to Staffordshire in earlier times. Drawing on historical, linguistic and innovative geographic (GIS) investigation, they explain the languages in which the names were formed, the periods in which they arose, and what they meant when they came into existence as meaningful descriptions of places in everyday speech. The INS's onomastic analysis includes the following key insights:

(1) Shropshire place-names are key to an understanding of the linguistic evolution of border landscapes. INS research elucidates the complex linguistic history of this Anglo-Welsh border region (summarised at **P1** xiv–xv, **P2** xiii–xiv, **P3** xx–xxi), traces the dynamics of community and language over centuries, and demonstrates the importance of toponomastic analysis for studying the development of local dialect and identity in this linguistically mixed environment (summarised at **P1** xiii–xiv, **P2** xiv–xv, **P3** xvii, xxi). Shropshire's landscape features retain Brittonic names, and the research points to the use of these and later Welsh names into the nineteenth century and beyond in the most westerly areas, with pockets of Welsh speakers identifiable further east (examples at **P1** 346, 380–1, **P2** 113–5, 358, 441–2, **P3** 162, 176–7).

(2) The names are witness to the changing character and uses of landscape, and record the perceptions of the county's non-elite inhabitants; they identify particular forms of agriculture, mining, and other industries such as smithing, baking, milling, fulling, tanning, and so on. Specialist occupations are also marked, e.g. Shelderton, 'shield-makers' settlement' (**P2** 397), and *Bloomesmythie* 'forge where blooms or ingots of iron are made' (**P1** xiii, 442) – this 1579 name is also one of many Oxford English Dictionary antedatings turned up by the research.

(3) The names record the flora and fauna of the county's historical landscapes. For example, wolves were a feature of south Shropshire, and place-names register their presence (**P1** 112; **P2** 140–1) and also, in the recurrent *wolfpit* names, responses to the threat they posed (**P2** xvi, 77, 285). Eels, now critically endangered, were once a valuable resource of the area and the relatively high number of *eel*-names bolsters the fragmentary written evidence including occasional references in the Domesday Book (**P2** xvi, 40, 210, 231–2, 326, 372).

(4) The names offer a way into the complex social and administrative structures in place at various times. They indicate central and meeting places, boundary locations, systems of defence and important routeways and trading sites (**P1** 328–30, **P2** xv–xvi, **P3** 85).

These insights unlock the social and cultural history and language of the region, enabling new understanding and appreciation of the landscape, its inhabitants, and their values.

3. References to the research
Publications (P1–3 are outputs of F1):
P1) Baker, J., (2018). *The Place-Names of Shropshire, Part Seven: Stottesdon Hundred and the Borough of Bridgnorth*. EPNS. ISBN: 978 0 904889 93 2.
P2) Baker, J. and **Carroll, J.**, (2020). *The Place-Names of Shropshire, Part Eight: Overs Hundred, the Borough of Ludlow, the southern part of Munslow Hundred, and the Stowe division of Purslow Hundred*. EPNS. ISBN: 978 0 904889 94 9.
P3) Cavill, P., (2020). *The Place-Names of Shropshire, Part Nine: Chirbury Hundred and the Bishop's Castle Division of Purslow Hundred*. EPNS. ISBN: 978 1 911640 05 9.
Grants:
F1) AHRC, 'Place-Names of Shropshire' (2013-2016), £714,720, **Carroll PI**, **Cavill Co-I**, **Baker RF**, AH/K000233/1.
F2) AHRC Follow-on Fund, 'Learning the Landscape Through Language: Place-Names and Childhood Education' (2019-2020), £75,824; UKRI Covid extension funding £28,470, **Baker PI**, **Carroll Co-I**, AH/T002921/1; EP/V520433/1.

4. Details of the impact
INS research has helped preserve the richness of Shropshire's and Staffordshire's linguistic and cultural past by enabling local heritage organisations and primary schools to use place-names to educate and inspire their communities and forge a stronger sense of belonging and identity. In providing onomastic expertise and new educational provision, the INS has increased capacity for community engagement at Shropshire and Staffordshire heritage organisations, which have recently faced '*budget cuts*' (**a**) and site closures (**d**), and has enhanced delivery in south Shropshire primary schools of the '*broad, rich curriculum*' called for by Ofsted in 2019 (**g1**). They have also improved extra-curricular learning and provided new opportunities for creative responses to Shropshire landscapes. Key impacts include:

i) Enhancing regional heritage preservation and interpretation through building organisational capacity and increasing public understanding of local history
The INS's 'Place-Names of Shropshire' project (**F1**) fostered new partnerships with archives, museums and libraries across the county and enhanced their capacity to present and interpret Shropshire's linguistic and cultural heritage. INS research expertise (**P1-3**) mitigated '*staff shortages*' at Ludlow Library and Museum Resource Centre (**b**) and '*reduced staffing and more limited opening hours*' at Shropshire Archives (**a**) by providing specialist content for a 15-month travelling exhibition (Oswestry Library and Oswestry Town Museum, autumn 2015; Ludlow Library, spring 2016; Shropshire Archives, Shrewsbury, autumn 2016; unmonitored visitor footfall), public talks across the county (approximately 535 attendees), and a booklet on Shropshire's place-names (approximately 850 copies distributed). The INS provided place-name expertise that Shropshire curatorial services '*do not have*', enabling them to '*extend the range*' of their offer and strengthen '*heritage provision for the community in south Shropshire and beyond*' (**b**). At Shropshire Archives, the INS provided the expertise needed '*to link [their] documents with the lives of local people, unlocking the hoard of knowledge preserved in those early records*', which was '*important in helping to fill a gap in provision for Archives users*' (**a**). The exhibition '*enabled [Shropshire Archives] to connect better with our local audiences*' and '*acquire new audiences*'; they estimate that '*500 people viewed the exhibition*', which is '*exceptional in our local context and has resulted in increased exposure for us*' (**a**). Long-term capacity was enhanced by retaining display panels from the exhibition for future use (**a**).

Shropshire Archives note that the project (**F1**) enabled the public to '*understand the local landscape and learn more about the languages and rich cultural identity of earlier inhabitants*', emphasising that the research (**P1-P3**) inspired a '*change [in] people's perceptions of the place-names around them and the past and present landscapes they reveal*' (**a**). Audience feedback confirms this: 88% of 198 respondents gained '*new insight into my local area/environment*' and 85% of 192 respondents were '*inspired to find out more about place-names*' (**c**). Free-text comments indicate improved knowledge of the local landscape ('*Absolutely fascinating. Makes you look at your environment differently*'; '*helps me to understand […] the history + settlement of the land around my area*'), and a closer connection with the local environment ('*The maps of the fields are wonderful… Bringing our past alive; 'it will inspire me to look at place-names when out walking in Shropshire'*') (**c**). The talks also improved public understanding of the border landscape: e.g. in Ludlow (2019), 92% of 88 respondents became '*more aware of the Anglo-Welsh linguistic heritage of south Shropshire*' (**c**).

Some parts of Shropshire covered in the research (**P1-3**) once belonged to neighbouring counties including Staffordshire. Interest in this research led to a new partnership with Staffordshire Record Office (SRO) (2016 –), which has '*increase[d] [their] capacity to undertake community-led research into Staffordshire's history*' and helped '*to provide opportunities to [their] Lichfield volunteers following the closure of Lichfield Record Office*' (**d**). INS-delivered study days at SRO (04/02/17 and 15/07/17) '*improved*' staff and volunteer '*knowledge of place-names as a source, and of what they can tell us about the local area*' (**d**). Feedback from volunteers demonstrates improved knowledge and understanding of place-names in local culture: '*this [study] day provided much more insight into the means of analysing the elements of old place names and their development and original meaning*'; '*The gentrification of names was a light-bulb moment*' (**e**). The study days enabled SRO to establish a '*dedicated place-names volunteer group*' (**d**), whose role was to harvest early name forms from historic documents. The volunteers' knowledge and skills were enhanced by INS-delivered palaeography training (4 days, Apr-May 2018): volunteers report having gained '*new insight into local records and/or local history*' and '*learnt new skills or improved existing ones*'; their comments include the ability to '*read medieval documents*' and '*widen the range of documents I can tackle for my own research*' (**e**). This initiative enabled heritage work to continue in Stafford and Lichfield.

The community researchers' work on local documents underpinned a new website that makes the research accessible for '*the wider public to learn about Staffordshire's linguistic and cultural heritage*' (**d**; 1261 site users from 26 countries, **f**). 36,937 georeferenced place-names have been uploaded by 29 volunteers – a '*huge undertaking*' that SRO state '*would not have been possible without the expertise and training provided by the INS*' (**d**). As weekly community research meetings in Stafford (Feb 2017 –) and Lichfield (Apr 2018 –) were paused in lockdown (Mar 2020), the INS continued to support '*the work and progress of [SRO's] volunteers*' with 23 virtual lessons on methodology, the languages of Staffordshire place-names, history and landscape (**d**). SRO state that their partnership with the INS has '*increas[ed] our capacity for research, public engagement and volunteer-led initiatives*', '*add[ed] tremendous value to the relationships between us (holders of collections), […] volunteers and the wider public*', and '*provided us with […] ways to work with our local community and to maintain public interest in the collections that we hold on their behalf*' (**d**).

ii) Enhancing cross- and extra-curricular primary education in south Shropshire, addressing Ofsted's revised Education Inspection Framework (2019)
Post-lecture discussions with a Ludlow audience (Mar 2016) highlighted the pedagogic possibilities for primary schools offered by place-names. This led to new partnerships and a new project, 'Learning the Landscape Through Language: Place-Names and Childhood Education' (**F2**, follow-on from **F1**), which enhanced the capacity of teachers and heritage professionals in south Shropshire to deliver Ofsted-required enriched humanities provision (**g1**), and thus to improve children's engagement and connection with their local heritage.

Working with teachers from seven primary schools (two day-long workshops, Jan and Feb 2019, with follow-up engagements), the INS increased the teachers' expertise in local place-names (**P1-3**), enhanced their understanding of how the research could improve their KS2 curriculum, and equipped them to devise new classroom resources to enhance provision at KS2. Some of these schools are particularly '*small*' (**h1**) and '*rural*' (**h2**) and collaborative projects with

outside partners are '*rare*' (**h1**); the workshops were therefore '*extraordinarily valuable*' (**h2**) and additionally helped schools '*to meet the needs of Ofsted's revised Education Inspection Framework*' (**h1**) with its requirement for a broader coverage of humanities within the curriculum (**g1**). Workshop evaluations show that the teachers gained '*new insight into my local environment*', '*new ideas for use in the classroom*', and '*inspiration for cross-curricular content*' and '*the creation/enhancement of school field-trips*' (**j**). Teachers reported that before the training they '*had thought that using place-names in primary teaching would be too difficult*' (**h1**) and '*wouldn't have considered place-names as historical evidence*' (**h2**). For one teacher, the training has '*increased my ability and confidence to teach place-names in the classroom*' and '*my approach to lesson planning has changed, as I now actively look for opportunities to embed place-names in classroom activities* […] *This new focus in my teaching will demonstrate to Ofsted that our school is now delivering a "deep dive" into learning that is rooted in our local landscape*' (**h1**). Others report similar changes and refer to improved delivery of Ofsted requirements (**j**).

Cross-curricular provision at KS2 has been further enhanced by the INS's development, in collaboration with teachers, of online resources based on Shropshire place-name research (**P1-3**) (1699 site visitors; 306 resource downloads from 250 users in UK, Australia, Germany, Spain, Latvia and Norway; **k**). At Kinlet C of E Primary School (class of 17 KS2 pupils), '*the resources have been extremely useful in supporting existing work in the classroom, complementing and enhancing our current provision*' both '*during and beyond lockdown*' (**h1**). The '*fun*' resources have '*enabled the children to work independently, making connections between their own locality and the wider Shropshire landscape*', resulting in '*an increased sense of belonging*', and '*a greater depth of knowledge of their local area*' (**h1**). The resources have also '*improved the learning experience*' for children '*with very different needs*': for '*reluctant readers and writers, particularly boys*', the '*eye-catching images and vocabulary*' have '*motivated [them] to learn in a more active and engaged way*'; whilst '*gifted children*' have been '*stretched […] to think critically and independently about the material*' (**h1**). At Bishop's Castle Primary School (135 pupils), INS resources have '*enhanced […] medieval teaching*', addressing '*a dearth of readily available information on the early history of Bishop's Castle and our local area*' (**h2**). These specially tailored resources have '*remedie[d]*' this *lack of detail*': the school now has '*fun evidence for understanding why Bishop's Castle developed as it did*' and can help children develop a stronger '*sense of place in their local history learning*' (**h2**). At both schools, the resources have '*enabled delivery of [the school's Ofsted] priorities*' (**h1**) by providing '*more emphasis on cross-curricular content*' (**h1**) and enabling '*the provision of a more balanced curriculum*' (**h2**). INS research has enriched both schools' teaching of diversity and inclusion (a key part of Ofsted's Inspection Framework; **g2**): the resources have enabled Kinlet to take '*a more nuanced approach to the teaching of British Values, in particular emphasising inclusivity – place-names provide evidence of the number of different groups with distinct linguistic and cultural identities who have settled in Shropshire over time. [The] resources are invaluable for schools with pupils drawn from multi-ethnic communities*' (**h1**); and Bishop's Castle to '*tackle the issue of Welsh identity*': '*We have lots of children with Welsh heritage, and Welsh identity is important to them. The resources help us to think about, and celebrate, the distinctiveness of an Anglo-Welsh border identity*' (**h2**). In November 2020, the web resources were actively publicised to all 159 primary schools in Shropshire by the county's Principal Education Improvement Adviser (**k**).

Extra-curricular education in Shropshire has been enhanced by INS-led training (Feb 2020) for educators working with ten organisations, all of whom gained '*new ideas for use in educational practice*' and '*inspiration for the creation/enhancement of educational field-trips*' (**j**). Organisations included the Shropshire Hills AONB Partnership, with whom the INS collaborated to produce resources to support their work with schools. Although delivery has been delayed by Covid-19, the resources have led AONB staff '*to rethink the way we teach children about their landscape and environment*', and '*develop new ways for children to explore the landscape*' (**i**). Their approach to teaching '*concepts of conservation*' has been enhanced by using '*interpretations provided by the INS research [that] reveal earlier farming and landscape management practices*' and '*a record of plants and animals that have long since disappeared*' (**i**). The AONB report that '*INS research is enabling delivery of the AONB's key strategic aims to improve children's understanding of the historic landscape and to preserve its linguistic and cultural heritage*' (**i**).

iii) Inspiring new creative responses to the local Shropshire landscape in fiction for, and by, school children at a time of lockdown and national crisis

INS research on place-names has inspired new creative literary responses to Shropshire landscapes, bringing children, both locally and worldwide, into closer connection with place-based histories. Award-winning children's author Catherine Cooper playfully reworks Shropshire place-names in her 'Jack Brenin' books, which offer readers '*around the world*' rich opportunities to learn about history and landscape (**I**). INS researchers have collaborated with her since 2016 to improve the '*[a]ccuracy and authenticity*' (**I**) of her fictional place-names. Cooper states that INS research (**P1-3**) has '*transformed [her] understanding […] of Shropshire's place-names*' and '*opened up new opportunities for creative expression*' (**I**). Her recent work has a new focus on '*place-names associated with springs and wells*', '*a direct result of the influence of the INS work*' (**I**). The INS-developed resources on Cooper's website (pengridion.co.uk/secret-shropshire/) elucidate the connections between her fictional place-names and real Shropshire names, and explain what place-names reveal about Shropshire's linguistic and cultural past. The resources are '*enriching the reading experience for many*' and have '*proven popular with virtual visitors, especially from overseas*' and '*local teachers, one of whom […] described them as "a fantastic resource"*' (**I**). Cooper uses them in her work with Shropshire schools and states that they improve the children's '*understanding of the local environment*' (**I**).

When Covid-19 interrupted the **F2** schools project, the INS teamed up with a Shrewsbury children's bookshop and BBC Radio Shropshire to launch 'Our Shropshire Stories' (03/04/2020), a competition inviting children to write 500-word stories inspired by Shropshire place-names. There were 96 entries spanning the entire county, including submissions that had been prepared as assignments set by school teachers. Winning entries were read on air ('Evening Show', 01/07/20), the *Shropshire Star* featured the winner of the 10–13 category, and selected entries were published on the project website. A participating teacher commented that the project '*gave [children] an opportunity to express their creativity whilst stuck at home, to learn about their local history and myths, which linked to our school work*' (**m**). Further benefits were generated by the publicity attached to the competition; this was perceived to be valuable in setting children's '*minds to tasks with a real-life context, not just creating work for school kept in their books but to be celebrated by others*' (**m**).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

a) Letter from Shropshire Archives regarding enhanced heritage provision and increased audience engagement.

b) Letter from Shropshire Council regarding enhanced heritage provision and increased audience engagement at Ludlow Library and Museum Resource Centre.

c) Summary report for Shropshire exhibitions and public talks: key statistics and audience feedback from evaluation forms.

d) Letter from Staffordshire Record Office regarding increased capacity for community-led research.

e) Summary report for Staffordshire Record Office study days and training sessions: key statistics and participant feedback from evaluation forms.

f) Analytics for Staffordshire place-names website: user overview and users by location.

g) Excerpts from Ofsted documents: **g1)** Ofsted, 'School inspection update: Special edition', January 2019, pp. 1-18 (p. 11); **g2)** Ofsted, 'The education inspection framework', May 2019, pp. 1-14 (p. 11).

h) Two letters from Shropshire primary schools regarding enhanced curriculum provision and student learning: **h1)** Letter from Kinlet C of E Primary School; **h2)** Letter from Bishop's Castle Primary School.

i) Letter from Shropshire Hills AONB regarding enhanced teaching and strategic delivery.

j) Summary report for Shropshire teachers' and educators' training sessions: key statistics and participant feedback from evaluation forms.

k) Summary report for F2 project website: key user engagement statistics.

l) Letter from Catherine Cooper regarding enhanced place-names usage.

m) Short story competition entries and feedback summary.