

<b>Section A</b>		
<b>Institution:</b> Durham University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 27 – English Language and Literature		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Cultural Heritage of North-East England: Performance, Education & Participation		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> Between 1 January 2013 and 31 December 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> John McKinnell Barbara Ravelhofer	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Emeritus Professor Professor	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2008-present 2004-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> Between 1 August 2013 and 31 July 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>Section B</b>		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>Records of Early English Drama North-East (REED-NE) has raised public awareness of, and encouraged active involvement in, North-East England's cultural heritage. Engaging and developing a large team of community volunteers and creative practitioners, the project has staged multiple significant dramatic events showcasing regional traditions thought lost, while sharing skills, refining historical knowledge, and inspiring diverse audiences. The principal impacts have been: <b>Revival</b> of a lost dramatic heritage and reinvigoration of live regional traditions. <b>Participation</b> of local community volunteers and creative artists (including musicians, dancers and puppet-makers), resulting in skill sharing and development, and demonstrable wellbeing benefits. <b>Inclusion</b> of varied audiences from across the North East, in part facilitated by theatrical interventions using striking puppetry, leading to increased interest and participation in local cultural heritage, especially its intangible musical and performance elements.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p>REED-NE has been driven by a 'research in practice' approach, through which productions of early music and drama from the North East (much of which had not previously been performed in modern times) have been made available to contemporary audiences via a team of community volunteers and creative practitioners. Previously, research in these areas had been London-centric and preoccupied with commercial theatre; REED-NE has redressed this imbalance by drawing attention to many neglected forms of anonymous and/or collective performance in regions hitherto regarded as 'marginal,' demonstrating that early performance in the North East was lively and diverse. Testing the theoretical assumptions of research against practical performance conditions, project productions have uncovered the many hidden historical dimensions, the artistic power and the enduring vitality of regional drama. REED-NE is part of a substantial international undertaking to collate all surviving sources for medieval and early modern drama in Britain. By providing detailed evidence of performances and their social, cultural and economic implications, international REED volumes have revolutionised scholarship regarding British theatre history, with the Durham-led project specifically charting the North East of England [R1]. An international research team gathered evidence over five years, through painstaking work in archives, libraries and public and private repositories nationally and internationally. REED-NE has traced and published an estimated 10,000 records pertaining to drama, music, dance, festivity and ceremonial, from the earliest sources (8-9th century) to the onset of the English Civil War in 1642. This includes manuscripts containing medieval mystery plays, accounts of rites customary in Durham Cathedral, and evidence of popular entertainment such as medieval stag ceremonies and May games. All evidence is</p>		

available in open access format online (Records of Early English Drama and Patrons and Performances, hosted by University of Toronto). REED-NE's transcriptions, translations, ample commentary and glossary of unfamiliar terms all maximise accessibility and enable user-friendly searches with built-in visualisations and guides; individuals can perform their own North East-focused enquiries and see nationwide links [R1]. Publications reflecting on this work of recovery and renewal have addressed medieval and Renaissance theatre, ceremony, music, dance, textiles, attitudes to theatre, patrons and performers, and the revival of dramatic heritage [R2-R6]. Project doctoral students Jakovac and Beckett researched Catholic entertainment and laughter in medieval drama; McKinnell investigated the Anglo-Saxon Lindisfarne Harrowing of Hell (written before 750AD, therefore Britain's oldest surviving play) and the Durham Song, a Tudor musical fragment connected with festivities in old Durham which inspired creative artists including Igor Stravinsky and Dylan Thomas. REED-NE's research has shed light on hitherto poorly represented dramatic practices, including folk traditions, religious processions and illegal Catholic drama, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of British, and indeed global, drama and pageantry. Further, via volunteers and collaborating creative practitioners, many such traditions and practices have been resurrected and restaged, bringing project research alive for, and with the participation of, the communities to which they originally belonged.

### 3. References to the research

[R1] McKinnell, John, and Mark Chambers, eds, *Records of Early English Drama: Durham. Records of Early English Drama* online (2020), University of Toronto, <https://reed.utoronto.ca>, and <https://community.dur.ac.uk/reed.ne/>. Durham University community webpages will be migrated as part of a website refresh during the submission period. New URL available on request.

[R2] McKinnell, John, 'On Lawrence of Durham's *Peregrin*', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 43 (2013), 12-30. <https://doi.org/10.5699/yearenglstud.43.2013.0012>

[R3] Wyatt, Diana. "Play Titles without Play Texts: What Can They Tell Us, and How? An Investigation of the Evidence for the Beverley Corpus Christi Play", in *Staging Scripture: Biblical Drama, 1350-1600* ed. by P. Happé and W. Hüsken. (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill Rodopi, 2016), 68-91. [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004313958\\_005](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004313958_005)

[R4] Chambers, Mark, Louise M. Sylvester, and Gale Owen-Crocker, *Medieval Dress and Textiles in Britain: A Multilingual Sourcebook* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2014).

[R5] Ravelhofer, Barbara, 'Rituale der Sterblichkeit: Der Totentanz in Bild und Aufführung [Rituals of Mortality: The Dance of Death in Image and Performance]', in *Ritual – Tanz – Bühne*, ed. by K. Stocker and H. Walsdorf (Leipzig: Leipzig University Press, 2019), 89-114.

[R6] McKinnell, John, 'Dramatic Elements in Liturgy: The Durham Processional', *European Medieval Drama*, 23 (2019), 101-13. <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.EMD.5.120692>

**Evidence of quality** R1-R6 were peer-reviewed for leading journals and publishers. R1-R3 and R6 were funded by an AHRC award, 'Records of Early English Drama North-East' (2013 - 2018); value GBP819,800, PI: John McKinnell; Co-I: Barbara Ravelhofer.

### 4. Details of the impact

REED-NE's research-driven revival practices have engaged new audiences in celebrating early drama, music and legend from England's North East, via strategies of community involvement and creative artist development. The project has used striking instances of puppetry and pageantry to return practices uncovered in documentary research to the people of the region, in turn prompting media coverage and an expanding audience for, and participation in, future events. Traditions in the performing arts, social practices, rituals and festivals are assets of 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' as defined in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) 2003 convention, fostering 'a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.' REED-NE afforded local communities first-hand experience of lost musical and

dramatic traditions, enhanced the skills and wellbeing of project volunteers, and developed the practice of participant creative artists. The project has a lasting and sustainable legacy in the region, continuing to shape the cultural heritage of the North East. Impact occurred in three main areas: revival, participation and inclusion.

### **REVIVAL: 'Research in practice' and diversifying audiences**

Building on previous research-based performances with amateur theatre groups in 2000 and 2010, where the benefits of such staging for the performance elements of research and to the region were first realised, REED-NE embarked on an ambitious series of public events – over 55 since 2016 – including talks, workshops, community courses, an exhibition in Durham Cathedral and, most significantly, an international theatre festival and a series of plays and concerts. From 2016 onwards, Ravelhofer's work on early dance, music and costume [R5] informed research-led productions reflecting local traditions such as Durham's medieval Boy Bishop, as well as pan-European phenomena such as the danse macabre or 'dance of death'. Team research on music and medieval performance conventions, as well as material culture including textiles [R2-R4] enabled the team to stage in 2016 the *Lindisfarne Harrowing of Hell* and *Peregrini* (c.1150) by Lawrence, a monk at Durham's former Benedictine monastery, at the *Theatrum Mundi* festival (Durham, July 2016) which also included a conference and exhibition (*Festive Traditions in the North-East of England*, Durham Cathedral, between April and May 2016; seen by approximately 40,000 visitors) [E1; E4], a street pageant, and 12 further productions. *Peregrini* and the *Harrowing of Hell* were staged alongside *The Sacred and the Profane*. The *Theatrum Mundi* festival attracted a live audience of approximately 1,500 people; online viewers number 4,050 [E1; E7]. To bring these revivals to the stage, the REED-NE team collaborated with professional choreographers, dancers, musicians (e.g. York Waits) and musicologists, as well as costume designers and textile historians of international standing, from Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and the London School of Historical Dress (with Hollywood and Globe Theatre experience) in order to realise productions of the highest scholarly and professional standards. Volunteer participants were thus exposed to top-class research and performance practice that would normally have been inaccessible to them. In turn, the research team found they had to update cherished theories from volunteers' feedback and the realities of a staged production [R5]. Enlivened by those volunteers and public audiences, the productions allowed participants insights into performance as embodied heritage [E1; E4]. As of December 2020, REED-NE productions, which consistently sell out, have attracted an estimated total live audience of approximately 44,000 people. Approximately 54,000 online visitors from 136 countries have accessed the website, and 7,254 people have viewed the project's productions and podcasts on YouTube, Facebook, or the project website [E1; E7]. REED-NE's main beneficiaries have been regional, both institutions and individuals, including: Durham Cathedral and World Heritage Site, Hexham Abbey, Brancepeth Castle, Durham Embroiderers' Guild, Twisting Ducks Theatre Company (Morpeth), Phenix Studios (Hexham), the Gillespie Brothers folk musicians (Northumberland), Society of Folk Horror Whitby, and Kirk Merrington Primary School, County Durham [E1; E3; E6]. Events involved participants from a wide range of contexts, including: school children, teachers, students, interns, church congregations, community groups and individuals practising music, crafts and drama; local professionals in arts and design; and performers, including those with disabilities (see below). They attracted a broad public audience, made up of both local people (an average of 49%) and students or visitors (an average of 34.5% of people), who may have an existing interest in performance or regional traditions, or may gain one through attending. For example, the show *Souls of the North at Durham Castle* (Between September and November 2018) attracted approximately 250 people, many of them repeat visitors. Over 87% of attendees learnt more about regional traditions; 98% wanted more such events [E1; E5].

### **PARTICIPATION: Sharing skills between volunteers, creatives and researchers**

REED-NE is dependent on public audiences, creative practitioners and a large number of volunteers in addition to the research team, and has had notable success in attracting audiences to volunteer for future productions, engaging them in the dramatic traditions of the North East, increasing opportunities for project legacies, and enhancing individuals' skills, wellbeing and social involvement. Since 2016, approximately 200 volunteers have made the

project's events possible; well over 60 have repeatedly performed in these shows. Regularly, between 50% and 60% of public audience members wish to take part in future events; many go on to become volunteers [E1; E4-E6]. For those volunteers, the experience is enriching. Most obviously, they learn about performance traditions belonging to their region, but they also hone motor, social and intellectual skills: from learning to speak and move more confidently in public, to costume-making, Renaissance dances, playing an unfamiliar instrument, or event management. They report increased confidence and widening skill sets [E6]. *Open Atelier* in Durham (June-July 2016) with London's School of Historical Dress offered free tailoring workshops to the public, attracting members from the Durham Embroiderers' Guild, who subsequently volunteered to produce costumes for REED-NE shows [E1]. At Kirk Merrington, 30 schoolchildren aged 8-12 were introduced to early dances. For their teacher, the workshop 'enabled the period to be brought to life for the children in a way that I was not able to do' [E3]. 3 girls went on to perform in the theatre festival in 2016 [E4]. *Strictly Come Renaissance Dancing* workshops (between February and March 2016) attracted 127 participants from a 75-mile radius; approximately 10% of people subsequently became volunteers, remarking: 'There is an emotional response to the steps, rhythm and music of the period that created a different me for a short time,' and 'I can't dance well, but now I want to' [E1].

The *Theatrum Mundi* festival included volunteers aged 10-70, approximately 30% of whom have gone on to participate in later project productions, giving feedback including: 'Performing on a stage was incredible. Since I was a small child I had always wanted to dance on stage and here, in Durham, I fulfilled my ambition! Thank you!' [E1]. One volunteer learned to play a new instrument: 'I would never have done that otherwise; [it] absolutely built my confidence' [E6]. Events appeal to an audience across a wide age range 'I'm 12 years old and I want in on this' [E1; E5], in turn driving a diverse range of volunteers. In addition, the project's creative collaborators develop their own skills and career plans. A Hexham crafts specialist benefited from increased exposure to regional heritage and hands-on involvement in theatricals: 'having access to people and ideas really changed my approach; I'm an absolute introvert so having to perform [...] pushed me' [E6]. Professional folk musicians from the region enlarged their repertory: 'It's a demonstration of love and confidence in the area that it's worth researching – as opposed to silence which carries the implication that there is nothing worthy in the local past; such care is very powerful' [E6]. REED-NE, by seeking audience feedback and participation, has generated an ever-increasing range of volunteers keen to ensure the survival of these reinvigorated local traditions; these volunteers develop their own practical, social and intellectual skills through working with experienced professionals and researchers. The result is a living body of revivalists, intimately engaged in the dramatic traditions of the North East.

### **INCLUSION: Theatrical interventions to engage new audiences**

REED-NE has pioneered the use of puppet-led dramatic interventions in public performance, using striking creatures to generate the interest of public audiences across a large age range, attract volunteers and drive media coverage of project events. A central example of this practice is the Durham Dragon, a substantial stage-prop that requires several people to manoeuvre, which has drawn in audiences, encouraging them to learn more about aspects of their intangible heritage, and to delve into project research [E1; E2; E4]. Research had uncovered a reference to a 16ft-long, 'very greate, strange & monstrous' dragon, brought to Durham in 1569 by an unnamed Italian mountebank (parish register, St. Nicholas's Church Durham, County Record Office EP/Du.SN 1/2). Inspired by this record, local artists Phenix Studios created a research-informed stage dragon for REED-NE, using techniques and materials that would have been available in the 16th century, although (given the lacunae about the creature's physique) exercising artistic freedom and incorporating white scales, eyes from a Sunderland glass factory and an appealingly sullen expression. The Dragon ties the project's research findings to the North East's abundant dragon lore (indeed Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky* is inspired by the local Sockburn worm), and it has also become a local mascot. Borrowed by enthusiasts, it tours Durham at Halloween, and has made guest appearances at the Washington Carnival pageant (17 Sept 2016), the 'Festival of Ideas' at the University of York (9-10 June 2018) with several hundred in attendance, and the Morpeth *Gathering*, an annual parade [E1]. In addition, the Dragon assisted in the diversification of project audiences, since it revealed how puppetry

helps individuals on the autistic spectrum overcome social difficulties. REED-NE collaborated with Phenix Studios and the theatre company Twisting Ducks ('Changing Lives Through the Arts'), which caters for artists with special needs. A puppeteering workshop in which the Dragon appeared improved the confidence of 5 autistic participants and enabled them to march in the Morpeth *Gathering*, applauded by thousands (27 April 2019). Participants stated that 'I am sometimes nervous and have a lot [of] anxious [feelings] about meeting new people but I had a clear role to do which made me really confident to go up to new people,' and that 'I learned lots of skills and loved the history and stories of yesteryear' [E1; E2]. For the workshop's leader, REED-NE opened a new career opportunity: 'I'm now a professional puppeteer which came out of this, surprisingly [...] now [I'm] an assistant director at [Newcastle's] puppetry festival for next year' [E6]. For a diverse audience, then, puppetry and pageantry increased participation, changed attitudes toward dramatic heritage in the region, developed participants' confidence, careers and skills, and generated media interest [E1; E2; E3; E5; E6], in turn driving volunteer recruitment, securing the project's ongoing cultural impact.

### **PROJECT LEGACIES: Intangible heritage renewed**

REED-NE leaves a substantial legacy of research and revival, and a significant body of local volunteers and creatives keen to continue reinvigorating the North East's traditions, a 'demonstration of love and confidence in the area,' [E6] as those participant folk musicians put it. After project involvement, a group of Northumberland artists decided in summer 2020 to found Hazelsong Theatre Company to celebrate regional performance traditions using, among other sources, REED-NE's research. Following the impact of Covid-19 on the national and regional economy, and the particular impact on performing arts, REED-NE presented a potential avenue to recovery in the region. The research team, local artists and local stakeholders submitted a bid to the AHRC's Follow on Fund scheme (November 2020) that capitalises on the project's findings in order to boost regional heritage and make local sites more economically resilient after the pandemic [E6]. Hexham Arts Centre stated: 'people respond best to their heritage when it is brought to life [...] the project will provide a unique window into the dramatic heritage of the region.' Ripon Cathedral sees REED-NE and its follow-on project as an opportunity 'to move beyond traditional mediums to engaging creative, immersive experiences that will create an impression for participants long after the project ends.' For Morpeth's *Gathering* committee, REED-NE's events 'inspired us to continue to plan future community activities,' such as 'puppetry and community involvement with people of all ages and abilities.' Further, they stated that REED-NE's continued work would 'enhance and refresh Morpeth's long-standing festival' and 'would contribute hugely to the community's sense of identity and appreciation of our shared cultural heritage' [E6]. For Brancepeth Archive Group, 'this joint venture proved exactly the value of reaching out into the community and involving the general public, as well as local groups such as ours [...] long may it continue' [E1]. Through drawing together researchers, public audiences, volunteers and creative practitioners; using strategies of audience-to-volunteer conversion; and making significant dramatic interventions in the region via research-informed puppetry on a large scale, REED-NE has developed the skills of a volunteer base, brought together local stakeholders, enriched creative careers, and revived interest in regional drama and performance, with long-term personal, social and cultural impacts.

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

[E1] Impact log, with dates of activities, audience statistics and citations of sample feedback, 2016-2020.

[E2] Documentation, Twisting Ducks pageant at the Morpeth *Gathering*, 27 April 2019.

[E3] Teacher feedback, workshop at Kirk Merrington Primary School, Spennymoor, 8 June 2016.

[E4] Documentation, REED-NE project website including screenshots of theatrical performances, excerpts from the 'Durham Dragon' production and REED-NE blog posts.

[E5] Audience feedback, Souls of the North, 10 Nov 2018.

[E6] Testimonials, REED-NE local participants and regional stakeholders.

[E7] Web traffic statistics, REED-NE project website / YouTube project materials.