

Institution: University of South Wales		
Unit of Assessment: 27 English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: St Cadoc in South East Wales: Making Wales's early Christian and pagan cultures visible		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014 – 2020		
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:
Professor Kevin Mills	Professor	2007-present
Maria Nita	Research Assistant	2016-19
Naomi Preston	Research Assistant	2018-2020
Period when the claimed impact occurred: January 2019-20		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Credited with bringing Christianity to Wales and an early contender for patron saint, St Cadoc is nevertheless little known even in south east Wales where many churches are named after him. Professor Kevin Mills' research, including his poetry collection, <i>Stations of the Boar</i>, and co-authored play, <i>Cadoc and the Drowned Boys</i>, has brought the stories of St Cadoc to a wider audience. By engaging people in south east Wales with the stories of their region, an area where post-industrial decline and Welsh language loss often obscure the significance of local histories, this research has facilitated a deeper understanding of their place in Wales's national identity.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>This multi-faceted research project enacts a kind of cultural archaeology: an uncovering and a questioning of the interface between Christian and pagan mythologies in the post-Roman shaping of south Wales. Knowledge of local stories and understanding of local history are important because 'the cultural cycles of one's particular contexts are a key source of self and well-being' (Plaut, Markus and Treadway, 2012). In tandem with popularizing the stories of St Cadoc (Catwg is the Welsh spelling and variants include Cadog), this 'archaeology' has a scholarly dimension in its investigation of the relationships between story, space and place. Although eroded, traces of the deep past are preserved in place names, monuments, buildings and geopolitical formations. Such a dimly understood heritage might usefully be 'questioned into visibility'. As a project, 'St Cadoc in South East Wales' helps to revivify traces of a lost past, rendering them intelligible again in their intriguing blend of Christian, pagan, mythological, political and geographical forms: enlivening the sense of the modern landscape as a multi-layered palimpsest.</p> <p>Mills' <i>Stations of the Boar</i> (R.1) is a twenty-five-page poetry collection published by Cinnamon Press in 2016, as the winner of their Poetry Pamphlet Competition for 2015. The poems emerged from Mills' reading of Llifris of Llancarfan's eleventh-century hagiography of St Cadoc, and from his long-term engagement with the textual and interpretative residues of Christianity. They build on his engagement with, and distinctive development of, interpretation theory, established in three monographs, numerous articles and chapters, as well as his most recent poetry collection <i>Zeugma</i> (R.2). <i>Zeugma</i> includes a sequence of poems, 'Swansongs', which takes its inspiration from St Cadoc. This collection explores issues related to place, space and narrative in poems whose <i>mise-en-scene</i> ranges from ancient Mesopotamia to contemporary Wales.</p> <p><i>Cadoc and the Drowned Boys</i> (R.3) is a play based on an episode from the Norman Life of Saint Cadoc. Written by the multi-award-winning dramatist, director and actor, Vic Mills, and based on Kevin Mills' research, it incorporates poems from <i>Stations of the Boar</i>, and includes a new short sequence of poems written by K. Mills specifically for the drama. Development of the play included <i>practice-as-research</i> elements in the exchanges between K. Mills and V. Mills. V. Mills' writing of the dialogue was influenced by K. Mills' writing of poems and vice versa. While K. Mills' <i>Stations of Boar</i> was the text around which the play formed, in the process of composition the production of plot and dialogue led to the writing of more, related poems.</p>		

This experimental play was designed to be performed by a small cast (just three professional actors and a musician) and using minimal costumes and props. This enabled it to be performed initially in a community theatre and then in a number of churches associated with St Cadoc. The challenging structure demanded that the cast moved from playing modern drama students devising a piece to becoming the ancient characters in the story they were telling about St Cadoc. The play also experimented with cross-gender casting, using a female actor to play Cadoc in order to explore the ways in which women had been left out of the original stories. A small, semi-professional theatre company was formed in 2018 by V. Mills and K. Mills in order to facilitate the production. Contemporancient Theatre employs three young professional actors, and a stage manager. Its focus on bringing together ancient stories and contemporary life emerged from K. Mills' poetic practice and V. Mills' theatre work.

Performances of the play at Blackwood Little Theatre, Blackwood, and seven churches named after St Cadoc in south east Wales were funded by £3000 from USW's Humanities Research. Everyone who attended the plays was given a free copy of *Saint Cadoc: History and Legend* – a pamphlet written by K. Mills to summarize his research and to offer members of the general public an account of what is known of Saint Cadoc's life and work (S.2). It includes stories from the hagiography and a digest of the historical evidence. Copies were also left in the churches for visitors and the pamphlet is available to download on the USW website (S.2).

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

R.1. Kevin Mills, *Stations of the Boar* (Blaenau Ffestiniog: Cinnamon, 2016), pp. 25. ISBN 978-1-910836-08-8. Winner of the Cinnamon Press Poetry Pamphlet Prize for 2015. Adjudication report: 'A sequence that contributes eloquently to the ongoing poetic debate about national identity in Wales by invoking the life of Saint Cadoc. Drawing on the 11th century hagiography, *The Life of Saint Cadoc*, these poems insinuate the saint's presence into modern Welsh landscapes and so interrogate how the presence of the past constructs a nearly hallucinatory sense of what it might mean to be Welsh.' (Ian Gregson) (S.1).

R.2. Kevin Mills, *Zeugma* (Blaenau Ffestiniog: Cinnamon, 2020), pp. 78. ISBN 978-1788640718

R.3. Vic Mills and Kevin Mills, *Cadoc and the Drowned Boys*. A play, co-written with dramatist, director and actor, Vic Mills.

Performance record:

Blackwood Little Theatre, Blackwood, opening performance 5 July 2019

Tour of **seven churches named after Saint Cadoc** in south east Wales:

- St Catwg's Church, Pentyrch, 9 July 2019
- St Cadoc's Cadoxton, Barry, 3 September 2019
- St Catwg's Church, Gelligaer, 4 September 2019
- St Cadoc's Church, Caerleon, 6 September 2019
- St Cadoc's Church, Glynneath, 12 September 2019
- St Cadoc's Church, Raglan, 13 September 2019
- St Cadoc's Church, Trevethin, 17 September 2019

Oriel y Bont, University of South Wales, Treforest, 16 September 2019

Further scheduled performances at Cardiff and Vale College, Neath Port Talbot College, Coleg Y Cymoedd, Nantgarw, were cancelled because of the coronavirus outbreak in 2020.

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

St Cadoc / Catwg's main sphere of influence lies in south east Wales. This project was designed to have its main impact in his home territory. This is an area which includes parts of the South Wales Valleys and where post-industrial decline and Welsh language loss now frequently obscure the significance of local histories. In this area, some 18 churches, four villages, two ancient monuments and one river are named after St Cadoc. The stories of St Cadoc are little known, even

in his own locality, but are related to more familiar myths and legends such as those of *The Mabinogion* and the tales of King Arthur. The Norman hagiography was written in Latin and translated into English in the nineteenth century. The English version is not well known, and the full text not easy to come by. This project has increased knowledge and understanding of this rich cultural heritage and its importance within community memory and identity. The creative collaboration between K. Mills and V. Mills produced an innovative and accessible play, *Cadoc and the Drowned Boys*, designed to bring this complex and sometimes contentious heritage to a wider audience in south east Wales. The opening performance was staged at Blackwood Little Theatre in Blackwood on 5 July 2019. An award-winning community theatre, with international connections, this is one of very few theatres in the South Wales Valleys. This was followed by a tour of churches named after St Cadoc in south east Wales.

Through this project, the critical and creative research of Mills has generated cultural impact by: raising public awareness of the stories of St Cadoc, their impact on the geopolitical history of the region, and their significance for Welsh national identity; reaching new audiences through the use of churches as theatrical spaces; and leading to the founding of a new semi-professional community-based theatre company:

i. Raising awareness of St Cadoc and enriching Welsh cultural life

Evidence that *Cadoc and the Drowned Boys* has raised awareness of the stories of St Cadoc is provided by audience responses collected through questionnaires, testimonials, and media coverage. Over 300 people attended performances during the initial tour in September 2019. The opening performance at Blackwood Little Theatre was booked out (over 100 people attended). Audience questionnaires showed that 73.3% of people who attended knew nothing at all about St Cadoc beforehand; 18.4% knew only one story; just 8.3% knew more than one story (S.3).

Audience feedback commented favourably on the performances as an engaging way of making the history of St Cadoc accessible and relevant: *'Very thought-provoking. Brought many ideas to the front and made the stories more relevant'*; *'Wonderful storytelling. I'm feeling more knowledgeable than one and half hours ago'*; *'Brilliant and enjoyable piece of theatre, and was good to see the exploration of language and of Welsh history'* (S.3). Beneficiaries include the local communities of the areas associated with St Cadoc and featured in the poetry collection and play. Audience responses acknowledged how the play has raised awareness of St Cadoc and enhanced understanding of the relationship between story, place and community. Bilingual poet Clare e. Potter, from the South Wales Valleys, commented: *'Stunning! This was thoroughly enjoyable on many levels. Thank you for an intelligent piece of theatre'* (S.3) Other audience members wrote of its educational and informative value, one anonymous respondent saying: *'Feel like I know Cadoc on a personal level now'* (S.3). Another commented: *'Deserves a much wider audience for both Cadoc and the play'* (S.3).

The performances also led to reviews and articles in the Welsh press and media (S.4, S.5, S.6) which generated debate about the contentious legacy of St Cadoc. A review in Wales's national newspaper, the *Western Mail* (24 August 2019), praised it as a 'bold new play' with contemporary relevance:

'[the characters in the play] uncover a darker story than they could have imagined – one of abuse, misogyny and obsession. They unearth a very selective history and myth, from which the stories of women have been removed. They find aspects of themselves, their lives and relationships laid bare, discovering that the historical characters they play have more in common with their real lives than they expected.' (S.5)

Performer and broadcaster Mike Winn called the play 'compelling, ambitious and thought-provoking' and noted its illumination of stories important to the locality:

'This play explores the stories behind the elusive St Cadog (Cadoc) whose obscurity is paradoxical compared to the number of streets, towns and other locations which bear his name in South Wales. [It] challenges audiences to question the processes of invention and re-

invention which are at the heart of story-telling and fiction but also crucial to our understanding of what and who we are; what we understand to be honest and true.' (S.6)

ii. Reaching new audiences through experimental theatre

The play was designed to exploit the theatrical potential of the churches in which it was performed, to raise public awareness of the historically important churches of the region as rich architectural sites, and to attract new audiences through its focus on the local. Beneficiaries include the vicars and congregations of churches associated with St Cadoc in south east Wales, who gained a new and deeper understanding of their church's significance in national history through the staging of the play. Poet Clare e. Potter noted the success of this unusual staging:

'Apart from the usual nativity play, it's rare to see drama played out in a church, particularly one that puts religion itself on trial. [...] The actors move seriously well around the limitations of the church, using various elevations in staging to represent shifting power structures. [...] this piece flows elegantly, driven not only by Kevin Mills' incredibly vivid poetry which hinges past to present, but by rhythm bedded deep in the dialogue.' (S.7)

The vicar of St Cadoc's Church, Glynneath commented: *'Everything I've seen and heard tonight was new to me'* (S.3). The warden of St Catwg's Church, Pentyrch wrote: *'Most people I have spoken to were delighted with the performance'* (S.3). Audience feedback commented on the staging, the performance, and the presentation of unfamiliar material: *'As a member of St Catwg's church I can say we were delighted it was staged here'; 'Challenging structure but fabulous twist'; 'Excellent ideas and a compelling way to tell people like me about Cadoc'; 'Entertaining and inspirational'* (S.3).

The research also led to a series of additional presentations and talks: Mills delivered a keynote lecture, 'Plot and Tell: Story, Secret, Place', at the annual symposium, Storytelling and Place (21-22 April 2017), of the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling, USW, attended by 69 paid-for ticket holders as well as USW students and staff. He delivered a paper on the project at a symposium, Activism: The Future for Universities and Museums, at St Fagans National Museum of History, National Museum of Wales (13 September 2019). The event offered a forum for thinking about how universities and museums can work together to support the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015). The 116 registered participants included individuals from HE, cultural organisations, the National Trust, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Public Health Wales. He also gave a talk on St Cadoc at Llandaf Mothers' Union (2 March 2020), which attracted 31 attendees. The performances led to invitations to deliver further talks to local societies and organisations: Gelligaer History Appreciation Society, Pentyrch Historical Society, and Vale of Glamorgan National Trust (all indefinitely postponed because of the coronavirus outbreak in 2020).

iii. Contemporancient Theatre (Community Interest Company)

A direct impact of this project is the founding in summer 2020 of a new CIC theatre company, Contemporancient Theatre, to bring theatre to small venues around south east Wales and engage communities in exploring their own history (S.10). The company has chosen as its motto the phrase 'Heb Hanes - Heb Hunaniaeth/ Without History - Without Identity' to draw attention to the importance of history to local and national identity and well-being.

Three early-career professional actors benefitted from being given roles in the play (they were paid for each performance) and from gaining a greater understanding of their personal and national history. The actor who played Rhiannon/ St Cadoc testified to the transformative nature of the experience for her:

'Being involved with Cadoc and the Drowned Boys was a fantastic experience as it was a subject and a history that was so close to me geographically and personally. Attending a Welsh comprehensive school as a teenager, Cadoc was one of the houses that was used for sports day and the school eisteddfod, however it was not until taking part in this project that I truly understood the significance of Cadoc's history. Re-telling the tale of Cadoc through a female

perspective truly changed my outlook on this historical figure, as it did for the majority of our audiences.' (S.8)

Comments from the actor who played Mal/Gwalches similarly reveal the transformative effect of knowing more about Wales's national history: *'I've learnt a great deal about Cadoc and the historical figures linked to him which has stimulated my interest in Welsh history, a subject which, unfortunately, I know very little about. This led to me being very interested in making theatre about stories and characters from Welsh history and exploring their relevance'* (S.9). Both actors have become founder members and Company Directors of Contemporancient Theatre. One of them noted that the play had not only developed his acting skills but also that *'understanding this side of the theatre business and development processes will be highly beneficial for me in the long term'* (S.9). The company is now developing its next project, based on K. Mills' research on Dr Richard Price.

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

S.1. Cinnamon Press Prize adjudication report on *Stations of the Boar*:

https://www.cinnamonpress.com/images/downloads/2015_pamphlet_adjudication.pdf

S.2. Pamphlet: Kevin Mills, *Saint Cadoc: History and Legend*. (Pdf provided and hard copy available on request.) <https://english.research.southwales.ac.uk/research-impact-stories/>

S.3. Feedback from audience questionnaires after performances of *Cadoc and the Drowned Boys*.

S.4. Review, *Nation Cymru*, 11 July 2019, <https://nation.cymru/culture/review-cadoc-and-the-drowned-boys-chooses-palatability-over-the-darker-aspects-of-the-story/>

S.5. 'A man of God: A bold new play exploring the life of St Cadoc tours south Wales churches next month, writes Jenny White', Double page feature in *Western Mail* Weekend Magazine, 24th August 2019, pp.24-5.

<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/A+man+of+God%3B+ARTS+%26+CULTURE+A+bold+new+play+exploring+the+life+of+St...-a0597233482>

S.6. Review-testimonial by performer and broadcaster Mike Winn. (Copy available on request.)

https://www.facebook.com/contemporancienttheatre/posts/2167770486861038?_tn=K-R

S.7. Review-testimonial by poet Clare e. Potter.

S.8. Testimonial from Rhiannon/ St Cadoc/Catwg actor.

S.9. Testimonial from Mal/Gwalches actor.

S.10. Contemporancient Theatre Company website: <https://contemporancient.org/>