

Institution: Lancaster University		
Unit of Assessment: 28, History		
Title of case study: From the Romans to the Romantics in Northern England's history: enhancing regional participation and global understanding		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000 to 2019		
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:
Chris Donaldson	Lecturer	January 2013 to August 2014;
Fiona Edmonds	Reader	September 2016 - present
Angus Winchester	Professor	September 2016 - present October 1990 - October 2017
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 to December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact Lancaster University's pioneering tradition of regional history is embedded in, and nurtured by, the region's communities. Long-lasting collaborations and innovative projects with organisations from the Victoria County History to the National Trust have enabled Lancaster's historians to transform learning, participation and wellbeing in Cumbria, Lancashire and northern England more widely. Volunteer-based research programmes have offered deep and sustained benefits for over 120 individual volunteers, in addition to major regional and national organisations. Lancaster's heritage collaborations have also enriched prominent cultural initiatives such as the Lake District's World Heritage Site Partnership. An award-winning Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) has extended the reach of the impact by directly engaging 8,479 learners from 127 countries with the research; exhibitions, talks and media coverage have reached more than 6.5 million people.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research Lancaster University historians have longstanding expertise in the study of northern England, especially the extensive region from Lancashire to the Anglo-Scottish border. Since 2014, the Regional Heritage Centre (RHC) has been a hub for this work, linking regional research with expertise in Digital Humanities. The RHC has facilitated collaborative publications and projects by 3 scholars, whose combined research ranges across more than a millennium. Edmonds has explored the period from sub-Roman times to the central medieval era; Winchester has focused on late-medieval and early modern history; and Donaldson has studied the 18th and 19th centuries. Their research has yielded 3 broad insights into the region's pivotal place in the history of Britain and beyond.</p> <p>The significance of regional identity: Northern identity is a topical theme, but contemporary discussions often neglect to ask how the region's distinctive characteristics emerged. Winchester and Edmonds have explored how the predominantly upland landscape influenced the inhabitants' livelihoods and culture. Winchester's work is exemplified by his pioneering monograph <i>The Harvest of the Hills</i> (2000), which deployed manorial documents and place-names to provide a richly textured account of rural northern England and southern Scotland c.1400–1700 [R1]. He revealed that dispersed communities were bound together by long-standing structures such as manor courts, which survived alongside emerging parish and county authorities. His 2005 article on regional identity further demonstrated how land tenure lent coherence to 'Lakeland' long before its Romantic-era popularity [R2]. Winchester has greatly developed this work through the Victoria County History (VCH) of Cumbria project, which he founded as the regional element of the VCH of England in 2010; Edmonds became Director in 2016 [G1]. Edmonds has also built on Winchester's place-name research to provide vital information about medieval communities that are poorly recorded, including an extensive co-authored chapter concerning languages and names in northern England and southern Scotland [R3]. Lancaster's place-name studies have supported further projects such as <i>Mapped Histories</i>, which collected the names of fields and landscape features within the area covered by the Rusland Horizons Landscape Partnership (2016–17) [G3].</p>		

The region as destination: Turning from the region's communities to tourists, Donaldson and Winchester have asked how, from the 18th century, the Lake District came to be revered for its beauty, rather than feared for its remoteness. Between 2015 and 2018 Donaldson pursued this topic as Co-investigator on a Leverhulme-funded project. He examined an extensive textual corpus (1.5million words) using the department's innovative digital methodologies to identify place-names and their descriptors. He thereby demonstrated how 18th-century aesthetic theory transformed writers' perceptions of the Lake District [R4, G2]. In collaboration with Winchester, he deepened this study by editing Henry Hobhouse's travel journal (1774), which reveals how the region's landscape assimilated its industries [R5]. The research resonates with current debates about the Lake District's character.

The role of the Anglo-Scottish border: Lancaster's historians have moved beyond Anglocentric approaches to the region, viewing the north-west as integrally linked with the Scottish borders and other parts of northern England [R1]. Edmonds has focused on the early medieval Northumbrian kingdom, which spanned the modern border. Her groundbreaking monograph revealed that the kingdom experienced intense cultural influence from the Gaelic-speaking areas to the north and west [R6]. She also contributed to the agenda-setting volume *Northern England and Southern Scotland*, co-edited by Winchester [R3]. Donaldson has shown how changing appreciation of Lakeland affected perceptions of southern Scotland, and vice versa [R4]. The 3 historians have revealed common features of, and contrasts between, northern England and southern Scotland, as well as the border's enduring significance for northern English identity.

3. References to the research

[R1] A.J.L. Winchester, *The Harvest of the Hills: Rural Life in Northern England and the Scottish Borders 1400–1700*, Edinburgh University Press, 2000. Indicative review: "a superbly documented, searching study that will surely become a classic", Joan Thirsk in *Economic History Review* 54 (2001). Held at HEI. *Peer-reviewed*.

[R2] A.J.L. Winchester, 'Regional identity in the Lake Counties: land tenure and the Cumbrian landscape', *Northern History*, 42 (1) (2005), 29–48. <https://doi.org/10.1179/174587005X38408>. *Peer-reviewed*.

[R3] K.J. Stringer and A.J.L. Winchester (eds), *Northern England and Southern Scotland in the Central Middle Ages*, Boydell and Brewer, 2017. Includes F. Edmonds and S. Taylor, 'Languages and names', 137–72; A.J.L. Winchester, 'Shielings and common pastures', 273–98. Indicative review: "This volume encourages us to think outside the familiar national boxes". Robin Frame in *English Historical Review*, 134/570 (2019). Held at HEI. *Peer-reviewed*.

[R4] C. Donaldson et al., 'Locating the beautiful, sublime, picturesque and majestic: spatially analysing the application of aesthetic terminology in descriptions of the English Lake District', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 56 (2017), 43–60. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2017.01.006>. Output of [G2], *Peer-reviewed*.

[R5] C. Donaldson, R. Dunning & A. Winchester, *Henry Hobhouse's Tour through Cumbria in 1774*, Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society (2018). Held at HEI. *Peer-reviewed*.

[R6] F. Edmonds, *Gaelic Influence in the Northumbrian Kingdom: The Golden Age and the Viking Age*, Boydell and Brewer, 2019. Indicative review: "The book demonstrates the amount of insight that such a broad [interdisciplinary] approach can achieve in relation to matters early medieval", Neil McGuigan, *Scottish Historical Review*, 99 (2020). Held at HEI. *Peer-reviewed*.

Research grants:

[G1] Winchester (PI), 2011-12; Winchester (PI), 2014-19; Edmonds (PI) 2019-22, VCH Cumbria Project, Cumbria County History Trust: GBP220,956.

[G2] Donaldson (Co-I), *Geospatial Innovation in the Digital Humanities*, Leverhulme Trust: (2015-18) GBP230,954. *Peer-reviewed*

[G3] Winchester (PI), *Mapped Histories*, (part of Rusland Horizons Landscape Partnership, led by Lake District National Park Authority), Heritage Lottery Fund: (2016–17) GBP12,239.

4. Details of the impact

Lancaster's exemplary work on regional history has achieved extensive and sustained impact within northern England. The research collaborations have boosted the participation, learning

and wellbeing of over 120 volunteers and enriched the cultural engagement of heritage organisations. The research has also reached widely into national and international audiences, engaging millions more through an online course, exhibitions and the media.

Intensifying the public's participation in regional heritage

The earliest and most enduring impact was achieved through the VCH Cumbria project, based in the RHC and funded by Cumbria County History Trust. This project has galvanised participation and learning amongst individuals and organisations, training volunteer researchers to work with Winchester, Edmonds and Rose (Research Associate). The project is inextricably linked with Lancaster's research into regional identity, archives and place-names [R1, R2, R6], which provided a basis for the volunteers' research guidelines and training.

The project's first achievement was to produce short histories of Cumbria's 348 townships, co-written by Winchester and approximately 100 volunteers. The volunteers were drawn from history societies and the community across the county; some had training in historical research, whereas others had no prior experience but wished to pursue historical interests in retirement. The short histories were published in *Cumbria: An Historical Gazetteer* (Lancaster, 2016) and are freely available on the Trust's website, which now attracts approximately 60,000 visits per year [S1]. The beneficiaries include a high proportion of interested groups in Cumbria (over twenty organisations) who contributed to the endeavour either as associated groups, funders or trustees. One example is the Cumberland & Westmorland Antiquarian & Archaeological Society: by providing resources for training new participants, the project has enhanced this society's charitable purpose of fostering the study of Cumbria's history. In the case of Cumbria Archives Service, the research has shaped discussions about access to archival resources, leading to improvements in the system for consulting documents in 2020 [S2i]. The beneficiaries also include around 100 volunteers, whose learning and participation has been transformed. Since 2016, Edmonds and Rose have worked intensively with 50 of the volunteers, who are drafting full histories of parishes ranging from Waberthwaite in the west to Kirkby Lonsdale in the east. In this way, the volunteers have benefited from Lancaster's research expertise, while providing valuable local knowledge [S3, S4]. The quality of the resulting research is seen in the project's first published parish history, *Kirkoswald and Renwick* (London, 2019), by Brockington with Rose. In *Landscape History* (2019) a reviewer noted that it "*contributes directly to the mission of the national VCH of providing 'authoritative, encyclopaedic histories' of every parish in the country*".

On a national level, other VCH county teams have drawn inspiration from Cumbria's volunteer participation; for example, the Cumbria model proved influential in the refoundation of VCH Shropshire in 2015. The Cumbria volunteers' handbook was, furthermore, used to redraft the revised national parish history template, issued in 2017. The concept of the Cumbrian 'short histories' has also shaped the VCH strategy for digital engagement, which aims for comprehensive coverage at a basic level. This strategy has so far led to the creation of an app that maps the histories of every place in England. The Director of the national VCH states: "*VCH Cumbria has been instrumental in developing the present-day VCH as a community and public history project, providing a replicable and extensible model for volunteer engagement*" [S2ii].

Enriching individuals' wellbeing through learning

The VCH Cumbria project has created a county-wide community of volunteers with the skills and motivation to undertake further research. They have received guidance through one-to-one sessions and quarterly meetings, drawing on Lancaster's interdisciplinary research tradition. Recent training sessions between 2017 and 2019 derive from Edmonds's research into Roman and medieval material culture [R6], Donaldson's work on early tourism [R5] and the recurring theme of the Anglo-Scottish border [R3, S4]. The meetings have enhanced wellbeing by forming social ties across this dispersed county and deploying the varied talents and expertise of volunteers. An experienced volunteer comments: "*My own experience has been one of great and growing enjoyment ... I have no way of adequately describing what it means to have my name on the front cover of a VCH short (history). The collaboration has had other very significant consequences ... More than 50 individual residents contributed to Kirkoswald and Renwick ... The impact on these communities was positive and enriching.*" [S3].

This model of collaborative working has had wider impact still by generating new volunteer-based research projects. In 2016 and 2017, Winchester drew on his place-name research [R1] when training 15 volunteers in Rusland, Cumbria, to gather and interpret field names for the *Mapped Histories* project. The project has since taken on a life of its own, yielding an interactive website and 2 books produced by the volunteers themselves (2019). The end-of-project report notes: *“The sense of belonging, not only to a group and common cause, but also to the heritage and landscape of their local area, has been a core part of the project ... In terms of their [the volunteers’] well-being, the project has had a huge impact.”* [S5iii–v]. According to the wider Rusland Horizons volunteer survey, 89% of participants felt that the project had increased their sense of identity with, and pride in, the area [S5ii]. In 2019 and 2020, Edmonds and Rose used their knowledge of medieval documents to assist 9 volunteers on the Heritage Lottery-funded Kentmere Heritage project. This was a collaborative research project that aimed to uncover the history of the parish prior to 1600 and produce an exhibition in the parish church, fostering the sense of community in this remote valley [S6].

Enhancing cultural engagement in partnership with heritage organisations

The Regional Heritage Centre is a focal point for over 75 organisations, including museums, historic houses and the National Trust. Lancaster’s regional research has transformed the way in which such organisations embed research in their outreach, exhibitions and funding applications. The community engagement uses the same methods as the VCH Cumbria project, such as training events, but this time for beneficiaries in the heritage sector.

Donaldson and Winchester’s research into the origins of tourism in the region [R5], helped to inform the National Trust’s activities to mark the Lake District’s dedication as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2017. Donaldson’s participation in the community engagement project *The Tables Turned* facilitated learning about the contributions that people from Cumbria, including Lakeland writers and artists, have made to world heritage. The project attracted at least 200 participants, including 150 Year 7 pupils from Keswick School, retired miners from Whitehaven and adults with special needs from Carlisle [S7i]. As a result of the project’s success, the organisation changed the way it uses university research to engage with the community, as seen in 3 Lake District properties (Allan Bank, Wordsworth House, Townend). The National Trust’s Participation Officer states: *“The project has enabled us to develop a method for engagement from communities with World Heritage OUVs [Outstanding Universal Values] ... our collaboration with Chris [Donaldson] has ensured that working in partnership with Universities is now central to our practice ... Having research-led activities at the heart of this project was essential to its success.”* [S7ii].

Donaldson’s research into Wordsworth’s perceptions of the Lake District [R4] also underpinned a collaboration with The Wordsworth Trust on 2 major exhibitions: *Wordsworth Country* (April 2016 to June 2017) and *By Duddon’s Side* (April to June 2017). *Wordsworth Country* attracted 89,985 visitors and *By Duddon’s Side* received 11,580 visitors, as well as an online audience of 25,000 (17% from outside the UK) [S8i/ii]. Visitors said that the research *“made me see Wordsworth differently”* and *“definitely made me want to know more”* [S9i]. The exhibitions informed the Trust’s planning and preparation for the redevelopment of its museum-visitor experience as part of their successful £4.1million Heritage Lottery Fund project *Re-imagining Wordsworth*. As well as describing Donaldson’s contribution as ‘invaluable’, the Curator and Head of Learning noted that it *“helped us towards how we might display manuscripts in the future ... This will feed into the Trust’s activity and interpretation plan for the stage 2 (HLF) application”* [S9ii].

From the region to the world: revealing northern history to international audiences

The activities described so far demonstrated an international interest in, and demand for, up-to-date information about regional history research. Edmonds and Donaldson responded to this need by creating a free MOOC hosted by the FutureLearn platform, entitled *Lancaster Castle and Northern English History: The View from the Stronghold*. The RHC produced the course in partnership with the Duchy of Lancaster, also involving 6 other regional and national organisations, such as The National Archives. The MOOC draws on Lancaster’s tradition of regional research by using the castle as a microcosm of northern English history, showcasing

Edmonds's research into the Northumbrian kingdom [R3, R6] and Donaldson's work on tourism (Lancaster was a key staging post en route to Lakeland in the 19th century) [R4].

Across 3 runs (October to November 2018, 2019, 2020), the course attracted 8,479 participants from 127 countries. In 2019, it won a Customer Service Excellence award and the British Universities Film & Video Council nominated it for a prestigious national 'Learning on Screen' award. The course is in the top quartile of History MOOCs for learner retention and completion. In 2018, learners made 10,882 comments, demonstrating that the course had transformed their appreciation of regional history. One commented *"you have an exceptionally wonderful asset, the castle of Lancaster. Using it as a means of illustrating not only its own history, (but also) the history of northern territory and neighbouring lands, has proved a most refreshing experience"*. 92% of the 389 participants in the end of course survey (first run) felt that they had gained new knowledge. 50% of these participants were inspired to find out more, and so Edmonds created an extra week of medieval resources, including an exercise on the Scottish raid of 1322. One learner commented *"it was very much a surprise about the Scottish involvement, hope to learn more"* [S10]. Across the 3 years, 48% of learners were located internationally. 308 learners stated that they would now visit Lancashire; in 2020 one learner commented *"My first priority once I can do so is to come and see this wonderful castle for myself after spending the last 7 weeks walking its history"* [S10]. This indicates an impact on tourism, which Edmonds is now developing in partnership with Marketing Lancashire, supported by ESRC Impact Acceleration funding.

Lancaster's projects have generated further impact through talks and media coverage. Since 2017, the RHC has hosted 5 sold-out study days on related topics for 610 learners; 93% of those surveyed said they learnt something new [S11i]. Donaldson, Edmonds and Rose have presented talks to 57 history societies across northern England and southern Scotland, reaching approximately 3,250 adult learners [S11ii]. Their research has received significant attention in the regional press and radio (combined reach of 161,369 people). Edmonds's work also gained international coverage through Dan Snow's *History Hit* (3million listeners per month), while Donaldson's research featured on BBC Radio 4's 'Making History' in 2017 (3.28million listeners) [S12]. Such coverage ensures that the next generation benefit from, and join us, in our research.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[S1] 2014–20 analytics from www.cumbriacountyhistory.org.uk (spreadsheet, available on request)

[S2i] Testimonials from the outgoing Secretary of Cumbria County History Trust (August 2020);

[S2ii] the Director of the national Victoria County History (November 2020)

[S3] Testimonial of a volunteer on the VCH Cumbria project (August 2020)

[S4] Feedback and participant forms from quarterly training sessions (overview of 2014-20 and example from May 2017)

[S5i] Rusland Horizons: HLF report (June 2019), pp. 29-30; [S5ii] volunteer survey, p. 6; [S5iii]

Mapped Histories report (March 2019); [S5iv/v] *What's in a Name?* and *Featherbed and Shive of Cheese* (volunteer publications, 2019)

[S6] NLHF report for the Kentmere Heritage Project (December 2020)

[S7i] *Under Northern Skies* (National Trust, 2018), p.61; [S7ii] Testimonial from the National Trust's Participation Officer (June 2019)

[S8i] Arts Council report (Deep Mapping the Duddon), p.6; [S8ii] Email from the Assistant Curator, The Wordsworth Trust (March 2018)

[S9i] Email from a member of Duddon Valley Local History Group (June 2017); [S9ii] email from the Curator and Head of Learning, The Wordsworth Trust (June 2017).

[S10] Databases of the three runs of the Lancaster Castle MOOC: 25,789 comments, 830 end-of-course surveys, and demographic analytics (spreadsheets available on request)

[S11i] RHC evaluation forms: 54 (Vikings); 43 (Names); 59 (Cymry in the North); 33 (Medieval Lancashire); 16 (World Heritage); [S11ii] HE-BCI/REF underpinning data for public talks (Edmonds, Donaldson, Rose); Edmonds's lecture guest book (available on request)

[S12] Reach figures from the national and regional media (print, podcasts, radio).