

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU)		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 34 (Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management)		
<b>Title of case study:</b> ICS34.02_Coastal communities: Research on seaside photography bringing increased cultural participation and new understandings and interpretation of coastal heritage and culture.		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2012-2019		
<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 Karen Shepherdson Mr Rob Ball	Reader Senior Lecturer	25/09/1998 – 01/01/2020 01/12/2008 – to date
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> August 2013-2019		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Britain's seaside communities have been characterised as shabby and outdated and, as recognised by the House of Lords Select Committee on Regenerating Seaside Towns and Communities (2019), been seen 'as a sort of national embarrassment'. Shepherdson and Ball use seaside photography to challenge that perception. Their work has contributed to the preservation and re-evaluation of an overlooked part of our photographic heritage, and uses photography to develop a more nuanced narrative of our seaside communities. Research has resulted in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preservation of seaside photographic heritage, via community collaboration to develop the South East Archive of Seaside (SEAS) Photography, including the protection and digitisation of over 10,000 historic seaside photographs;</li> <li>• Enrichment of cultural life by enhancing presentation and interpretation of seaside photography; including for Turner Contemporary's first photography exhibition <i>Seaside: Photographed</i> (2019);</li> <li>• Improved understanding by challenging perceptions and raising the profile of coastal heritage and communities;</li> <li>• Increased cultural engagement leading to enhanced confidence and self-esteem.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Impact is underpinned by collaborative archival, curatorial and practice-based research by Ball and Shepherdson concerned with seaside photographic heritage, and the use of photography to recalibrate perceptions of seaside culture and communities. Britain's once prosperous coastal resorts now contain some of the UK's most disadvantaged communities, and media coverage of these towns over past decades has been 'almost unremittingly negative' (Coastal Communities Alliance). Shepherdson and Ball use photography to develop a more nuanced narrative of coastal heritage and contemporary culture.</p> <p>Research began in 2012 with the development of SEAS Photography (Shepherdson/Ball), established not only to preserve and increase access to at-risk photographic seaside heritage, but also as a hub for research projects. Initially supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (£75,200), over 10,000 photographs have been preserved and documented. The archive includes the Sunbeam Photographic Company collection, based on the Isle of Thanet (1919-1975); the largest known collection of early (1850-1910) seaside ambro and ferro types; and a significant collection of 'walkies' (images taken by seaside commercial photographers and available almost instantly). 'Walkies' were considered unworthy of archiving at the time and were primarily located by the research team through public calls, with the owners participating in their preservation and documentation. Through development and interpretation of the archive and the creation of new photographic seaside imagery, three interconnected areas of enquiry have emerged: (1) A reappraisal of seaside photographic practice; (2) The location of seaside photography within broader social and cultural histories; (3) New perspectives on the culture and heritage of coastal communities.</p>		

The exhibition and publication *Beyond the View: Reframing the Sunbeam Photographic Collection* (Shepherdson/Ball) [3.1] considered the work of early commercial seaside photographers (1850-1900), utilising the SEAS holdings, including over 500 located 'walkies'. Early beach photographers were itinerant, and their work often dismissed as inartistic and disposable; research revealed the considerable creativity and technical skill involved in making these images and established their contribution to British photographic history. It also demonstrated how seaside photography brought insights into broader social histories of leisure and reflected wider society. The beach photographer represented an affordable alternative to studio portraiture, documenting the leisure time of individuals whose image might otherwise not have been captured. Via interpretation of these images, material shifts in portraiture were revealed, reflecting the changing social landscape of the second half of the 19th C. These themes were further considered in the online exhibition *Beyond the View: Reframing Early Seaside Photography* (2015) for the Arts and Humanities Research Council (Shepherdson) and book chapter of the same title [3.1].

*Seaside: Photographed* (2019) explored the relationship between photographers and the British coast and its communities and visitors, from the 1850s to the present day. By examining the complexities of family life, relationships, leisure, and counterculture, as portrayed by images captured at the coast, it demonstrated how the British seaside has been used, photographically, as metaphor for the state of the nation [3.2]. Curated by Shepherdson with Professor Val Williams (University of the Arts London), it featured images from SEAS, alongside work of eminent photographers and artists including Vanley Burke, Susan Hillier, Jane Bown, Anna Fox, Henri Cartier Bresson and Paul Nash. It also, crucially, included works from previous unknown photographers or archives, located through a public call, redressing the critical neglect of amateur photography and creating a more complex and layered narrative of coastal life as reflected in seaside photographic practice.

The role of photography in recalibrating perceptions of the British seaside and its communities is reflected in both *Beyond the View* [3.1] and *Seaside: Photographed* [3.2]. *Beyond the View* revealed a seam of overlooked imagery, which provided a window into coastal culture and history; while *Seaside: Photographed* critically examined seaside descriptors of decline and regeneration by interrogating the romanticism and beauty of the coast, in contrast to the often difficult realities faced by those who live there. This is complemented by the creation of new photographic work which further considers photography's reinterpretation of coastal communities and places. *Dreamlands* (Ball) [3.3] examines the history of coastal entertainment, foregrounding the cyclical nature of neglect and repair within seaside communities through a series of ferrotypes (*Dreamlands*, 2015; *Coney Island*, 2017; *Funlands*, 2019). *Dreamlands* positions 'regeneration' as reparation, locating it within the broader historical and social narratives of the ebb and flow of coastal resorts. Ball's *The Itinerant* (2017) [3.4], a reworking of the travelling portrait photographer, examines the craft of traditional process in a contemporary context and the exchange between the photographer, sitter and viewer. Coastal public events are held producing ferrotypes in a mobile darkroom. The resultant images are displayed outside the mobile studio during the events, and in exhibitions and publications subsequently, creating a contemporary archive of coastal photography.

### 3. References to the research

3.1 Ball, R. & Shepherdson, K.J. (2014) *Beyond the View: Reframing the Sunbeam Photographic Collection*. Canterbury: Sidney Cooper Gallery. Jul 11<sup>th</sup> – Aug 23<sup>rd</sup> [Exhibition]. Adapted into a commissioned online exhibition for the AHRC. Shepherdson, K.J. (2015) *Beyond the View: Reframing Early Commercial Seaside Photography* <https://ahrc.ukri.org/research/readwatchlisten/imagegallery/beyondtheview/>; Ball, R. & Shepherdson, K.J. (2014) *Beyond the view: New perspectives on seaside photography*. Broadstairs: Burton Press. ISBN: 9780957163751. [Authored Book]; and Shepherdson, K.J. (2018) 'Beyond the View: Reframing the Early Commercial Seaside Photographer' in Kerr, M. and Ingleby, M. (eds), *Coastal Cultures of the Long Nineteenth Century*, Edinburgh University Press. pp. 225-241. ISBN: 981474435741. [Book Chapter]. The exhibition was accompanied by a two-day conference held at the Sidney Cooper Gallery and the

Turner Contemporary (10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> Jul 2014). Keynote speakers included Martin Parr, Brigitte Lardinois and Audrey Linkman. All available CCCU on request.

**3.2** Shepherdson, K.J. & Williams, V. (2019) *Seaside: Photographed*. Margate: Turner Contemporary. 25<sup>th</sup> May- 8<sup>th</sup> Sept. [Exhibition]. Accompanying publication, Shepherdson, K.J. & Williams, V. (2019) *Seaside: Photographed*. London: Thames and Hudson. ISBN 9780500022061. [Authored Book]. Submitted REF2.

**3.3** Ball, R. *Dreamlands*. Photographic project [Artefact] incorporating: Ball, R. (2015) *Dreamlands*. London: Photographers' Gallery. Jun 15<sup>th</sup> – Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015. Ball, R. (2015) *Dreamlands*. Stockport: Dewi Lewis. ISBN: 9781907893742. Ball, R. (2017) *Coney Island*. Stockport: Dewi Lewis. ISBN: 9781911306139. Ball, R. (2019) *Funland* London: Hoxton Mini Press: London. ISBN 9781910566510. *Dreamlands* featured in the Journal of Photography and Culture: Rob Ball (2018) 'Dream Lands', *Photography and Culture*, 11:1, 109-120. Dewi Lewis is an internationally renowned photographic publisher, awarded Kraszna-Krausz Foundation Award for Outstanding Contribution to Publishing at the World Photography Awards in 2012. Submitted REF2.

**3.4** Ball, R. (2017) *The Itinerant*. [Artefact] Margate: The Shop Front. 8<sup>th</sup> Jul – 6<sup>th</sup> Aug, later at Margate: Turner Contemporary. 25<sup>th</sup> May – 8<sup>th</sup> Sept 2019 as part of *Seaside: Photographed* and featured in accompanied publication *Seaside: Photographed*. Short films documenting *The Itinerant* can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/229730781> <https://vimeo.com/229608572>. Submitted to REF2.

#### 4. Details of the impact

Via community collaboration, work with cultural institutions and media engagement, Shepherdson and Ball's critical engagement with seaside photography has been to the benefit of coastal communities, including their cultural institutions, community organisations, volunteers, and young people. It has resulted in the preservation of, and increased access to, marginalised and forgotten seaside photographic heritage; presentation and interpretation of seaside photography; a challenge to perceptions of contemporary coastal communities; and increased cultural participation leading to enhanced confidence and self-esteem.

**Impact on community heritage via community collaboration to develop the South East Archive of Seaside (SEAS) Photography.** A digitised archive of over 10,000 historic seaside photographs (4,977 images since Aug 2013) has been created, many of which had existed as deteriorating glass and film negatives. SEAS offered a last chance to save the photographs of the Sunbeam Collection. Martin Parr, Patron of SEAS, said of the *Beyond the View* (2014) exhibition: 'At its core is the wonderful Sunbeam Collection, which has been rescued for the Nation by SEAS [...] in the exhibition we have a glimpse of the richness and variety of the work that is part of this archive'. **[5.1]** Community focused from the outset, SEAS was established in partnership with stakeholders, including Thanet District Council, Margate Museum, and a group of volunteers who cleaned and digitized the images and acted as ambassadors. Volunteers' comments on the benefits of involvement include: 'I am completely drawn into the archive's time, place and stories [...] I get more out than I ever put in' and 'I feel so proud to be part of this Project.' **[5.2]**. Further increasing community collaboration, open calls were made to locate over 500 'walkies' which were 'hidden' in family albums. At community collection events, owners participated in the preservation and documentation of their images, which were scanned, attributed, catalogued, and finally exhibited as part of *Beyond the View*.

**Impact on cultural life by enhancing the presentation and interpretation of seaside photography.** The *Beyond the View* exhibition attracted an estimated 1,500 visitors **[5.2]** and featured in the Financial Times (FT) Weekend Magazine (Jul 2014) who highlighted the personal relevance of the images. 'Surely one of the reasons we love poring over old family snapshots like these is because, along with the past, they're often where we see the earliest incarnations of the people we've become' (circulation 2014: approx. 720,000) **[5.3]**. Visitors' comments evidence the personal resonance of the imagery and its relevance to social history, including: 'Wonderful pictures of ordinary people going about their ordinary lives'; 'these images are interesting – emotionally, as social documentary, as photographs. Equals looking at equals'; and '[s]o many local people and self and family!' and 'that's how the seaside was. Lovely memories' **[5.2]**.

For *Seaside: Photographed* (2019), Shepherdson and Williams appealed to the public for archive material and personal photographs. Key 'finds' included Raymond Conrad Lawson's 1950s colour documentation of family gatherings and Pat Gwynne's domestic pictures c. 1965-1975, both demonstrating the importance of amateur photographers in documenting family life on the coast. *Seaside: Photographed* was Turner Contemporary's first photographic show and its Director, Victoria Pomery, highlights its uncovering of 'rich and sometimes unknown work from across photography's history' and notes that exhibition's popularity with audiences, attracting 159,083 visitors [5.4a]. Sarah Martin, Turner Contemporary's Head of Exhibitions, also draws attention to the exhibition's showing of 'a different, less obvious aspect of seaside life' [5.4b]. Critical reception was extremely positive, with reviews commenting on the revealing of new imagery and contemporary reinterpretation. Giving it 5 stars in *The Observer*, Laura Cumming wrote, '[n]ot the least pleasure of this tremendous show [...] is the sheer rush of revelation'. In a 5 star review in *Inews*, Hettie Judah highlights how the curators had presented the coast 'as sites of complex and multiple identities'. She continues 'this is not run-of-the-mill stuff for exhibitions. [...] Williams and Shepherdson's interest in photography does not just extend to the images themselves, but beyond, to the context in which they were made and presented' with the subject being 'permitted quite astonishing complexity' [5.3]. Turner Contemporary received an Arts Council England (GBP 223,725) grant to tour three additional seaside venues (Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool; Newlyn Art Gallery; and John Hansard Gallery, Southampton). The Grundy and Newlyn shows were postponed until 2021 due to Covid-19. The Southampton exhibition opened in October 2020, just before the 2nd lockdown, and later translated to an online show [5.4a].

**Impact on understanding by challenging perceptions and raising the profile of coastal heritage and communities.** SEAS is underpinned by a desire to offer a more nuanced narrative of coastal communities past and present. One way in which this is achieved is the attraction of a broad spectrum of media coverage and work to extend appreciation of coastal heritage. Ball's *Dreamlands* was commissioned by The Dreamland Trust, a charity born out of the Save Dreamland Campaign, with the aim of saving the UK's oldest amusement park from redevelopment and preserving its heritage. Images from *Dreamlands* accompanied features on the park and its reopening (in 2015) on the BBC website, *The Guardian* and the *FT Magazine*, who writes how Ball's images 'echo the broader repairs going on around him' [5.3]. *Dreamlands* was also the subject of an exhibition at the Photographers' Gallery (2015), with an estimated 32,000 individuals visiting the gallery during the show's run. The potential of photography to positively engage audiences with Margate's heritage was recognised by The Dreamland Trust's Heritage and Engagement Manager, Jan Leandro. Leandro comments on how photography was used to build an understanding and appreciation of the park's heritage, with Ball's 'beautifully atmospheric tintype images' being 'the perfect vehicle for this, they appear to be of the past but are created in the present and connect the contemporary with the historic, leading the viewer back in time.' [5.5]

Reviews of Ball's *Funland* (part of his *Dreamlands* series) reflect on the charm and nostalgia of seaside resorts. Tatler writes how the images captured 'coastal towns in their faded splendour [...] [n]uanced and nostalgic, these pictures capture today's seaside summers with sympathy'; *Creative Boom* noted the 'sense of nostalgia and vulnerability' in the images, and *Creative Review* wrote how they captured the 'sleepy spirit of the British Seaside' (all 2019). Additionally, a picture feature on *Funland* was published in *The Observer* and on *The Guardian* website. *Seaside: Photographed* coverage includes the *FT Magazine*, *The Guardian*, *Wall Street International Magazine*, *The Telegraph* and *Inews*. Richard Holledge's piece in *The New European*, 'Rollercoaster ride: The rise and fall and recent recovery of Britain's seaside towns', gives an example of coverage highlighting the ebbs and flows of coastal culture [5.3]. Images from SEAS was utilised in the development of projects by architect Sam Causer and the Vividero Colectivo, resulting in the outdoor exhibitions/events *Blushing Pavilion* (2015) and *Margate Coastal Park* (2016), which highlighted the value of Margate's heritage and culture. Carlos Maria Romero (Vividero Colectivo) writes how the archive was 'fundamental' to the success of the projects, informing development and featuring in the final works. *Blushing Pavilion* featured in the

Architecture Foundation's publication *New Architects 3* (2016), launched in the British Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale [5.6].

**Impact on cultural participation via the use of heritage as a catalyst for increased cultural engagement leading to enhanced confidence and self-esteem.** The Heritage Lottery funded *Projection SEAS* (GBP49,600) was created by social enterprise Project Motorhouse, in partnership with SEAS. Students from the Royal Harbour Academy, Ramsgate learned about digitising images and chose an image from the archive as a catalyst for their artwork. The result was 3 exhibitions of photographic work, including a pop-up at the Turner Contemporary and on hoardings on Ramsgate Main Sands. For participants, many excluded from school, involvement in the project was a 'life-changing event' and for most was one of their 'rare successes in life' [5.7a]. Jo Mapp, Community Engagement Officer, Project Motorhouse commented on the benefits of the project noted how 'people who were shy, they have absolutely just blossomed' [5.7b], and that 'using photographic images from their own communities and heritage encouraged [...] ownership of the history of their town' and developed the students' 'sense of their place in it' [5.7c]. Students commented 'you get that sense of pride because you know that you have done it yourself'; 'you could become someone from this'; 'I never thought I was going to do stuff like this and I am really excited for my future'; and 'it gave me the confidence to go out and do more.' [5.7b]

One of five national strands for Tate's Archive and Access Learning Outreach Programme (2013-2016) was *On Margate Sands* (2015/2016), where Turner Contemporary explored local and national heritage through SEAS, the archives of Canterbury Cathedral and the Tate artists' archives. Utilising archives as a catalyst to engage new audiences with arts and heritage, it engaged local partners who work with adults and children with additional needs, including the Garden Gate Project, Laleham Gap School, Creative Adults Project, and Kent Foster Care Association. [5.8] It reached 709 participants through 50 workshops [5.9] culminating in an exhibition at Turner Contemporary in July 2016. 'None of the stakeholder groups involved [...] had previously engaged with Turner Contemporary, and the project manager believed that archives offered a different entry point' with heritage being more accessible than contemporary art [5.9]. Comments in the final project report from Turner Contemporary evidence impact on participants and include; 'a number of pupils who before the workshops were not engaging with the subject or attending art lessons [...] will be looking to take Art, Craft and Design as a GCSE option.' (Teacher); 'Before this I wouldn't have spoken to anyone [...] I could never have taken part in group activities' (Participant); 'I have a lot of things in my head. I couldn't talk to anyone – I'd have to cry or something. Now it's all a story. It's fine because I draw what I think'. (Participant) [5.8].

## 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 Quote from Martin Parr included with visitors' comments on SEAS website here

<https://www.seasphotography.org.uk/outputs-exhibitions-publications> (scroll to end of page)

5.2 SEAS Heritage Lottery Evaluation Report. (p.23 & 35).

5.3 Collated media coverage: *Beyond the View*, *Dreamlands* and *Seaside: Photographed*

5.4 (a) Testimonial/statement from Director of Turner Contemporary (b) Film giving overview of exhibition <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fCFt5EVG1H8> (quote at 0:52).

5.5 Testimonial/statement from former Heritage and Engagement Manager, Dreamland Trust.

5.6 Testimonial/statement from Carlos Maria Romero (Vividero Colectivo).

5.7 (a) Report on the HLF project *Projection SEAS* <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/our-work/projection-seas-contemporary-response-historic-archive> (b) Videos of outcomes here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiRUO6ne3c8> (quotes at 1:05, 7:54, 8:30).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLElisyO710> (quotes at 1:29, 2:44) (c) Testimonial/statement from Community Engagement Officer, Project Motorhouse.

5.8 *On Margate Sands* Project Summary Report, Turner Contemporary (2016) (quotes p.5)

5.9 Archives and Access Learning Outreach 2013-16; Final Evaluation, Tate (2017) (figures p.3; quote p.51).