


Institution: University of Stirling		
Unit of Assessment: 28. History		
Title of case study: New Heritage and Museum Futures for Replicas		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: September 2014 - Present		
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:
Sally Foster	Senior Lecturer in Heritage	09/2014 - Present
Siân Jones	Professor in Heritage	04/2016 - Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: September 2014 - December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Foster and Jones have transformed UK-wide and European approaches to replicas in heritage and museum environments in terms of culture, policy and practice. Replicas of historic objects are widely used, often in response to challenges, including damage, destruction and restitution, but they are usually considered insignificant proxies. Foster and Jones have changed the appreciation of replicas, focusing attention on their rich biographies, authenticity and value, thereby enhancing public experience (Impact 1). Their 'New Futures for Replicas: Principles and Guidance for Museums and Heritage', a co-produced, cross-sectoral statement building on their research, has been endorsed and welcomed across Europe. It and its underpinning research have changed collections management and access, designation, exhibition and on-site interpretation at Historic Environment Scotland and National Museums Scotland (Impact 2). The research is also formally recognised as an evidence-base for policy in Scotland (Impact 3).</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Our research challenges traditional assumptions that seek authenticity in qualities <i>intrinsic</i> to original historic objects and shows how replicas, whether analogue or digital, are important in their own right: they acquire value, authenticity and aura (the power to generate an indefinable sense of 'magic'). Replicas can play a critical, yet often undervalued, role in heritage conservation, management and interpretation, usually as proxies for missing or threatened originals. However, there has been little systematic study of how replicas 'work' in practice. The problem is that authenticity and value have traditionally been associated with original historic objects and the rich biographies of replicas have been neglected. As a result, replicas are often left unprotected, under-exploited and under-researched because of the failure to integrate them within wider curatorial, conservation and interpretation strategies. Foster, with input from Jones, led on the design and creation of a <i>Research Framework for Carved Stones (R1)</i>. This Framework highlighted the importance of replicas and the need for more research focusing on them. Specifically, it argued for the importance of understanding the authenticity and value of replicas and the need for rich case studies to illustrate this. It also highlighted the need for evidence-based guidance to inform professional practice in museums and built heritage contexts.</p>		
 <p>Figure 1. Research on Iona: engagement with local schoolchildren (L) (Foster at far right of image) and observing visitors (R)</p>		
<p>To remedy this significant research problem, we embarked on a major research project centring on the 1970 concrete replica of the eighth-century AD St John's Cross, Iona (Figure 1). The project represents the first major cultural biography of a replica, itself a copy of the world's first Celtic cross, located at one of the most significant early Christian sites in Europe, and one of Scotland's most important tourist and religious places. Between 2017 and 2018, we undertook qualitative social research examining the contemporary significance and authenticity of the St John's Cross</p>		

replica for locals, visitors or heritage professionals (**R2**). In parallel, Foster researched the composite biography of the original cross and its replica, revealing 1,200+ years of time-depth to the changing meanings and values of the internationally significant, iconic St John's Cross (research brought together in **R3**).

We reveal how the life of a replica generates networks of relationships between people, places and things, including the original historic object, and authenticity is founded on what these relationships embody, *as well* as the dynamic material qualities of the object. Specifically, the research unravels the part that social relations, craft practices, creativity, place and materiality play in the production and negotiation of the authenticity of replicas. The cultural biographies of replicas, and the 'felt' relationships associated with them, play a key role in the generation and negotiation of authenticity. At the same time, they inform the authenticity and value of their historic counterparts through the 'composite biographies' (linked original and copies) that are produced. Important underlying stories of human creativity, skill and craftsmanship are rendered invisible when replicas are treated as mere surrogates for a missing historic 'original'.



Figure 2 Foster and Clarke research the NMS concrete Kildalton Cross

In on-going research that informed the development of the Iona study, Foster continues to work closely with National Museums Scotland (NMS) in the production of a composite cultural biography of their entire early medieval cast collection, only published so far in case studies (e.g. **R3–R4**). The whole collection has been recorded, working with Dr D.V. Clarke, ex-Keeper of Archaeology (Figure 2).

With **R1–R4**, and building on our pre-Stirling research, we have sought to change the way that heritage and museum professionals perceive and therefore work with physical and digital replicas of historic objects and monuments.

3. References to the research. Stirling authors in **bold** text.

R1. Foster, S., Forsyth, K., Buckham, S. and Jeffrey, S., 2016 [named contributors include Jones], *Future Thinking on Carved Stones in Scotland: A Research Framework* Available: <http://stir.ac.uk/58u>.

R2. Foster, S.M. and **Jones, S.**, 2019. Concrete and non-concrete: exploring the contemporary value and authenticity of historic replicas through an ethnographic study of the St John's Cross replica, Iona. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, **25**(11), 1169–88. DOI: [10.1080/13527258.2019.1583272](https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2019.1583272).

R3. Foster, S.M. with **Jones, S.J.**, 2020. *My Life as a Replica: St John's Cross, Iona*. Oxford: Windgather. <http://stir.ac.uk/58x> [Reviews include: 'Some international charters need to be modified and updated on the basis of this study. ... The authors have done great service not simply to Iona, its people and those who admire the island, but to the global community of those who strive to achieve the best outcome for the built heritage' (review by Aonghus MacKechnie, [Innes Review](#), May 2021)].

R4. Foster, S.M., 2018. Scottish agency in the V&A Cast Court. V&A blog. Available: <http://stir.ac.uk/590>.

R1, R2, R3 peer-reviewed funding: Royal Society of Edinburgh (GBP16,072), Historic Environment Scotland (GBP10,970). **R4** funding: Henry Moore Foundation (GBP3,750). **R1 & R2** received RSE case-study recognition: <http://stir.ac.uk/593> & <http://stir.ac.uk/596>.

4. Detail of the impact

To achieve impact, we specifically targeted curators and other heritage practitioners whose agency could lead to wider impacts (see below). We **have transformed the way heritage and museum professionals perceive, value and use replicas on heritage sites and in museums**. There is now less prejudice towards replicas and their potential is being positively harnessed, thus also benefitting visitors. Our replica research is also challenging established ideas about social value and authenticity more generally in the heritage and museum sectors.

Our approach to creating impact was shaped by the concept of the heritage cycle, which underpins much of Western heritage practice: understanding something leads to heritage practitioners and others valuing it, valuing leads to caring, caring leads to enjoyment by a wider public, and enjoyment leads to a wider desire to understand more. The particular emphasis was on the often-neglected social values that people invest in replicas.

The initial focus for heritage practitioner impact was Historic Environment Scotland (HES), the lead public body for Scotland's heritage (with 1,200 staff managing 300+ monuments), who were engaged via presentations and dissemination of research outputs (**R2**, **R3**). An international audience of heritage practitioners was reached via our peer-reviewed article in *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* (DOI:13505033.2019.1588008), a journal widely read internationally by heritage practitioners. We then organised three workshops for national and international heritage practitioners, devoted to in-depth discussion of replicas in light of our research results: *Replicas in museums and heritage contexts: putting theory into practice* (28 Nov 2019), *Co-production of guidance* (29 Nov 2019) and *Historic replicas in north-west Europe: current research, future prospects* (8 Jan 2020, Stirling). The November workshops, held in National Museums Scotland (NMS), Edinburgh, were a partnership of the University of Stirling, International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS UK), NMS and the Scottish Graduate School of the Arts and Humanities' Heritage Hub.

Impact 1: Changing the appreciation of replicas

'I really can't say how much I enjoyed your wonderful book [**R3**]. I've already told my colleagues in my Team that it's required reading because it will change people's perspective, not just on replicas of course, but on community engagement, conservation, preservation of ruins, and restoration.' This unprompted feedback from Randal MacInnes, Head of Place, Publishing and Learning at HES, captures the spirit and reach of the change in professional understanding and awareness of replicas, the consequences of which are explored below (**S2a**). This issue, which was little-reported-upon at the time, captured the interest of journalist, Chris Green, who researched and published a 'long read' in national newspaper *The i*, specifically centred on our book and the question of whether it matters that something is a replica (**R3**) (16 July 2020, **S3a**; see also *Scotsman* 21 June 2020, **S3b**). The impact of wider awareness of our research can in turn be seen in the fulsome use of our book in an eponymous online religious reflection (7 June 2020) to Peebles Old Church by the Very Rev Finlay MacDonald (Chair of the Iona Cathedral Trustees and ex-Church of Scotland moderator) (**S4a**).

Independent, co-produced guidance for working with replicas (S1) emerged from exciting, transformative dialogue and cross-fertilisation between new-generation ECR thinkers and experienced international professionals that took place at our workshops (see above). Unusually, this guidance is cross-sectoral (encompassing both museums and heritage organisations), resulting in joined-up thinking and working practices. By impacting understanding and awareness within international heritage and museum sectors we fuelled the following further impacts.

Impact 2: Changes to cultures, attitudes and practices in the heritage and museum sectors

Historic Environment Scotland

At this national heritage agency, the most immediate impacts have been on designation practices and interpretation at one of its top tourist attractions, the internationally significant Iona Abbey. The Category A listing of the St John's Cross replica on Iona in March 2020 confirms **changing attitudes, organisational cultures and practices**; it is now recognised as an 'outstanding' example of a structure of 'special architectural or historical interest' (**S5a**). As a direct outcome of her awareness of our research and its relevance, the Head of Designation had invited Foster to submit a request to designate the research subject. Having previously made a conscious and explicit decision *not* to designate the replica on 19/7/2015 (SM12968), this is the first time HES has designated a free-standing heritage replica. This sets a precedent in terms of the application of designation policy in Scotland. Since this designation was a significant departure in terms of designation practice, *Historic Scotland* magazine commissioned a five-page article about the research and its designation outcome from a journalist, 'Making a great impression. How the replica of St John's Cross on Iona became a monument in its own right'. In the article, Elizabeth McCrone, Head of Designation, reflected, 'For me, listing a replica was really interesting. It shows how something created not that long ago has quickly become part of our cultural life. It is a cultural and philosophical mind-shift to not think of a replica as having less value than the real article. We need to evolve the way we look at our heritage, as history never stops' (**S5b**; see also **S2b**). Neil Curtis, Head of Museums, University of Aberdeen, confirmed how 'It is an important public signal that replicas deserve attention and care' (**S5b**).

Due to the **R2–R3** research, HES asked Foster to be an academic advisor for the updated on-site interpretation signage at Iona Abbey, which was delivered to the site in 2020. As a result, for the first time, the site now introduces its visitors (65,000 in 2019) to the replica's story (**S2c**). Iona Abbey guides are now also telling new stories: 'Reading your book has made me appreciate the story of the creation of the replica as a story in itself and this will now become part of my guided tours as and when we get back to doing these' (Nicola Welsh, **S2d**; see also Alice Wolters, **S2e**).

Our research has also directly influenced regulation of designated places by challenging thinking in HES' Planning, Consents & Advice Service, particularly how they assess and articulate cultural significance, which is what informs strategic and day-to-day decision making (**S2f**).

National Museums Scotland

The impacts described here predominantly result from Foster's research on the NMS plaster cast collections (e.g. **R3–R4**), alongside our joint collaboration with NMS on *New Lives*. It also illustrates how impact is generated during the research process through interaction with curators and their collections. 'Foster and Jones have contributed significantly to both the research and practical curation of the national collection [...] Through the activities of curators visitors have been encouraged to think differently about the authenticity, value and significance of the NMS' replicas transferring academic endeavour into real and tangible improvements to public appreciation and knowledge' (**S6**). Principal Curator, Dr Martin Goldberg's detailed testimonial (**S6**) specifies rediscoveries in collections, new understandings captured in museum records, accessioning of neglected casts and moulds and new conservation of objects. This 'appropriate curation' includes that 'we have stopped this material slipping through the gaps of recent reorganisation and improved care of objects' (**S6**). Foster's research 'influenced the goals and outcomes' of the modernisation of the storage reorganisation 2014-16 at the National Museums Collection Centre: notably, resources allocated to preservation of the plaster casts and innovation in storage design that facilitates their access to the public. 'NMS are increasingly using these new stores for public engagement activities, especially tours. The cast collection is an important draw for both general tours and specialist groups looking to see the largest collection of representations of Early Medieval sculpture in one single location. Foster's work has provided an enriched context for these activities' (**S6**). Curators are also making plaster casts more widely available for exhibitions (including Celts at the British Museum in 2015 and Medieval St Andrews, planned for 2020 but postponed).

International and UK-wide

Our *New Futures for Replicas: Principles and Guidance for Museums and Heritage* (**S1**) (published July 2020 along with associated resources; Figure 3) was co-produced with museum and heritage professionals to inform sector policies and practices. The Collections Trust, with its mission to help 'museums capture and share the information that gives their objects meaning', quickly added *New Futures* to their online resources for Spectrum, 'the UK collection management standard that is also used [by museums] around the world' (**S4b**). This is their **first replica-specific guidance**, and therefore a tool of practical benefit to most UK museums because of the prevalence of replicas.



Figure 3 Screenshot from New Futures website www.replicas.stir.ac.uk

Co-producing this document changed the attitudes of international and UK practitioners, as noted in post-workshop evaluations. They recognised that the intellectual and practical treatment of replicas was previously disjointed and fragmented in terms of heritage and museum practices, and actively contributed to formulating principles and guidance that put our new thinking into practice. With replicas and their originals often sitting between places, collections and sectors, they identified ways to resolve different and divergent practices, which may well include inertia and invisibility, as well as inconsistency: 'Foster & Jones manage to stimulate great and in-depth thinking, challenging existing and inherited approach' (Dr John Raven, HES); 'I did not think about replicas being so full of different kinds of meanings, and their history is so long' (Dr Hanna Forssell,

National Museum Finland), 'I changed my perspective on how you can embed a replica into a community by the act of participation' (Dr Cynthia Osiecki, National Museum Norway) (**S7a**).

Practitioners have adopted our approach to replicas as authentic objects with composite biographies that draw people together with different perspectives, seeing the St John's Cross replica (**R3**) as a 'good "template"' for future work for putting composite biographies into practice (Dr Sue Brunning, British Museum: **S7a**).

New Futures principles and guidance have been widely endorsed, explicitly acknowledging the impact on ways of thinking, including by HES, National Museum of Wales and National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden (**S1**, pp. 1, 18). Gillian Findlay, Vice-President of the Museums Association said on their website, and in *New Futures*, 'New Futures for Replicas necessitates an urgent re-calibration of how replicas are considered by museums and presents exciting directions for research, engagement and interpretation of these objects'. Described as a 'must read' on 1 August 2020 by Dr Sara Perry, Director of Research and Engagement at MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology), it was the recommended 'Weekend reading' of the Network of European Museum Organisations on 9 August 2020. The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works invited Foster to write a feature article for *News in Conservation* (**S8**), for its 40,000-plus 'engaged supporters'.

The global pandemic inevitably affected the speed at which curators' plans to act on the *New Futures* guidance have been implemented. However, there is evidence of clear intention. 'I'd encourage everyone who curates or works with replicas to read this & be inspired to explore their potential! I'm going to start by improving the documentation of those [replicas] under my care when I return from furlough' (Brunning, British Museum, 28 Aug 2020, **S4c**). Within a month of the January 2020 workshop, the National Museum Finland put together a team 'dedicated to mapping replicas of [its] collections and how to deal with them in the future' (**S7b**).

Impact 3: Evidence-based policy making

The success of the shift toward recognition of the value of replicas is further represented by the inclusion of these considerations in emerging policies. As Henry Owen-John, Head of World Heritage at English Heritage, noted, 'The fact that *New Futures* and the advice of Historic England on the reconstruction of heritage assets were published within a few weeks of each other illustrates the contemporary relevance of these topics as museums and heritage bodies try to find a responsible way through the ethical challenges they raise' (20 October 2020, **S4d**). For instance, it is a measure of its impact that our research has twice featured as a Built Environment Forum Scotland case study (<https://www.befs.org.uk/resources/historic-environment-case-studies/>). It was also selected as an example of where 'increasingly evidence is informing policy' in HES' *Place in Time [OPiT] Annual Performance Report 2019* to the Scottish Government, listed under the theme 'Cross-cutting: strategic' (**S9**, pp. 14, 23). 'Every year we use the best available data and evidence to show trends and progress in developing OPiT' (**S9**). It is the first inclusion of a case study relating to replicas. At the end of 2020, HES started to draft new *Managing Change in the Historic Environment Guidance Notes* and tells us that *New Futures* and its underpinning research is informing this and will be cited (**S2f**). Policy considerations are also relevant beyond the UK. 'As we have to explain our attitudes towards our own collection of copies, [the guidance] will first of all support the policy of my own organization' (anonymous international workshop attendee, **S7a**).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1. *New Futures for Replicas: Principles and Guidance for Museums and Heritage* leaflet.

S2. HES Testimonials: **a.** Head of Place, Publishing and Learning; **b.** Head of Designations; **c.** Interpretation Manager; **d.** Iona Steward; **e.** Relief Monument Manager, Iona Abbey; **f.** Deputy Head of Ancient Monuments.

S3. **a.** Media coverage in *The i* 'long read' article, 16 July 2020 and **b.** *Scotsman*, 21 June 2020.

S4. **a.** MacDonald reflection; **b.** Collections Trust; **c.** Social media collation; **d.** Owen-John blog.

S5. **a.** HES listing documentation for St John's Cross replica; **b.** HES magazine article about listing.

S6. Testimonial from Dr Martin Goldberg, Principal Curator, National Museums Scotland.

S7. University of Stirling summary evaluation of November 2019 and January 2020 workshops.

S8. Feature article for IIC *News in Conservation* 80 (2020).

S9. HES *Our Place in Time Annual Performance Report 2019* report.