

Impact case study (REF3)

Institution: University of Plymouth		
Unit of Assessment: UoA28		
Title of case study: Using history to empower communities at Powderham Castle		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012-2020		
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 Daniel Maudlin	Professor of Eighteenth-Century Architectural History	2005-present
Professor James Daybell	Professor of Early Modern British History	2006-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 01.08.2013 – 31.07.20		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Through a long-term, site-specific project, Maudlin and Daybell's research into the histories of gender, material culture and space has empowered members of present-day communities including LGBT+, asylum seekers, carers and cared for with dementia, and the older adult community. Working in co-production with local groups and Powderham Castle, a major historic site in Devon, our research has been the foundation for a range of public history and heritage events and activities developed to empower participants by using history to build confidence and improve their sense of self and well-being. Our specific work with these communities has also fed into Powderham's wider visitor experience, and, through partnerships with Historic Houses and the University of Pennsylvania, extended to sites in the UK and USA.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Maudlin and Daybell's research on the subjects of gender, material culture and space in early modern history underpins the specific community and heritage management impact at Powderham. These publications are not on or about Powderham, and this is not a single research project with a public engagement activity added on; rather, the long-term aim has been to explore how a heritage site can be used as an interface, a platform, for the ongoing translation of academic research including themes, concepts and approaches into meaningful community impact. To this end, our underpinning research is a broad body of work that through Powderham is mapped to specific beneficiaries.</p> <p>A key step to impact was to translate the broad themes, concepts and approaches of our published research into site-specific stories. This was achieved through the research activities of a collaborative international team of postdoctoral researchers, masters students, undergraduate interns and a citizen humanities team working in the archives room at the castle itself, Devon Heritage Centre, The British Library, and Oxford's Bodleian Library. This research activity captured in our project report provided the specific hidden histories of Powderham, the 'hooks' upon which the wider body of research could be hung as the precondition for the next stage: impacting community groups.</p> <p>The central historical hooks that emerged through this process, linking published research to specific evidence discovered at Powderham, were: the social ostracism and exile of William Courtenay, the homosexual 9th Earl of Devon, in the early nineteenth century; the design and construction of the now 'lost' American Garden; and the chance discovery in a cupboard of the 1787 Map Book, a pictorial snapshot of the lands around Powderham in 1787 establishing through physical survey that the house had 'turned' three times through the Georgian</p>		

period (rebuilding to change which side was the front). Each story then became the basis for an impact project working with a different community group.

The impact pathway between research publications, site-specific projects and impact beneficiaries can then be mapped as follows:

- Concepts of gender and building [3.2,3.3 & 3.6] ; 9th Earl; LGBT community and asylum seekers; embedded into interpretation film and tours; general public
- Concepts of landscape, uses of space and design for disabled groups [3.2, 3.5 & 3.6]; American garden; dementia groups; embedded into interpretation film and tours; general public.
- Concepts of landscape, community and use of space [3.4, 3.5 & 3.6]; Map book; older adults/local community; exhibitions for general public.
- Concepts of Georgian and British Atlantic architecture [3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 & 3.6]; house that turned; curatorial staff/managers; general public
- Concepts of gender [3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 & 5.6]; all projects; UK and USA heritage management practice.

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

3.1 J. Daybell, *The Material Letter: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012)

This landmark study represents the first major socio-cultural study of manuscript letters and letter-writing practices in early modern England.

3.2 J. Daybell, 'Gender, Politics and the Early Modern Archive' in *Gender and Political Culture, 1400-1700*, ed. James Daybell and Svante Norrhem (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 25-46

A key output of an AHRC project which looks at the ways in which issues of gender shaped archives and fundamentally constructed and controlled knowledge.

3.3 J. Daybell, 'Gendered Archival Practices and the Future Lives of Letters', in *Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain, 1580-1690*, ed. James Daybell and Andrew Gordon (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), pp. 210-36.

This article focusses on the archiving of women's letters as a way of uncovering gendered archival practices, which mediated how letters were read and interpreted by future generations.

3.4 D. Maudlin and B. L. Herman (eds.), *Building the British Atlantic World: Spaces, Places, and Material Culture 1600-1850* (University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill, 2016).

This ground-breaking book, published in USA and UK, established architectural history and material culture as a transnational discipline and was recipient of the 2016 Allen G. Noble Prize, International Society for Landscape, Place and Material Culture.

3.5 D. Maudlin, *The Idea of the Cottage in English Architecture, 1760 - 1860* (Routledge Research in Architecture) (London: Routledge, 2015).

The key output of an AHRC fellowship, this is an original monograph on the connections between landscape design, art and architecture. Following the success of the first edition in UK and USA, a second edition was published in 2018.

3.6 D. Maudlin and M. Vellinga (eds.), *Consuming Architecture: On the Occupation, Appropriation and Interpretation of Buildings* (Routledge, 2014).

An important collection in architectural history and theory that, for the first time, brought the concepts of vernacular architecture studies to bear upon 'polite', architect-design architectural design, production and thinking.

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

As mapped above, our research benefited the following groups: 1) community groups; 2) curatorial staff, guides and c.30,000 annual visitors at Powderham; 3) curatorial staff at historic houses in the UK and USA through partnerships with the Historic Houses association and the University of Pennsylvania.

1. Community Groups

i. LGBT+ Community: Our research has empowered

the local LGBT+ community through a new interpretation of British history that celebrates a prominent gay man in history. Working with a group of 30 participants from Pride in Plymouth, we developed and implemented an LGBT+ heritage trail and guided walk around the house and gardens based on our interpretation of archival records and spaces connected to William Courtenay, 9th Earl of Devon (exiled for homosexuality in the late Georgian period). The trail was piloted in May 2019 and is now run as a LGBT+ tour at Powderham's biannual Heritage Open Days (500+ participants) and embedded within the general guided tours (c.30,000 visitor participants annually). A film of the pilot tour, narrated by the Co-Director of Pride in Plymouth, is also shown to all visitors waiting for guided tours [5.9]. The tour uses materials produced by the project team to convey the idea that narratives of the past are fundamental to people's gendered sense of self, community and identity; that it is imperative that these narratives be diverse; and that this diversity be reflected in a variety of sites where narratives are made. The Co-Director of Pride in Plymouth wrote *'the English country house representing a history and heritage of white, male, heterosexual privilege is normally thought to exclude the LGBT+ communities...however, historians from Plymouth opened up this world to our members, using their knowledge and expertise in Georgian history architecture and gender to show how Powderham Castle was our history too'*. One participant saw the tour as a *'fascinating dialogue of contemporary sensibilities and shifting historical narratives'* and some found a personal connection to William's story acknowledging that there is still *'a struggle to be accepted'* and that *'coming out is hard'*. Another participant concluded with the comment that *'my sexuality is one facet of who I am and, as such, I would hope that it was equally a part of my story as my work, my spirituality, my interests, my contributions, my friendships, partner – MY LIFE!'* [5.1, 5.7, 5.8 & 5.9].

ii. Refugee and Asylum Seeker Community. Through an intersectional follow-on project with Pride in Plymouth, our research also specifically empowered LGBT+ refugee and asylum seekers resident in the South West, who, in exploring the exile and displacement of the gay 9th Earl, gained a new sense of inclusion and engagement with Britain and British culture (outputs 2, 3 and 6). The group of 18 participants found, to their surprise, that they were welcome and connected to the seemingly alien and forbidding cultural space of the British country house and that it was a site that could have value to them in situating and understanding their sexuality and exiled status. A Nigerian participant shared that they had previously had no idea that people were gay in history because their perception, based on their own country, is that it is a recent *'aberration'*. Another shared when considering William's story that they could *'relate with being exiled due to persecution of being bisexual'* [5.1, 5.7 & 5.8].

iii. Dementia Community. Working with The Mede, an Exeter-based charity, our research benefited 24 carers and the cared with dementia through a series of events based in the 'lost' American Garden. This project developed and implemented therapeutic dementia trails that, based on eighteenth-century ideas of associative triggers and the imagination (output 5), used the historic planting schemes and designed landscape of the American garden to introduce participants to stimulating spatial and sensory experiences [3.6]. The project was linked to Powderham's mission *'to facilitate health and happiness through education and the arts'*. The Director of The Mede has expressed how their organisation *'feels incredibly privileged to have participated in and benefitted from the forward thinking, inclusive activities the University of Plymouth has developed with the Earl of Devon. The ways that this partnership has impacted local people living with dementia has truly championed and honoured them in the community. This has a significant holistic impact on not just the individuals and their sense of dignity but also on their families. They are valued and encouraged to continue living a full life contributing to society and making connections and friendships. We hope this continues!'* [5.2, 5.7 & 5.8] A film of the sensory garden events highlighting the benefits of the site to dementia sufferers is shown to all visitors waiting for guided tours (average 30,000 per year) [5.10].

iv. The Older Adult Community. Based on our research into archives, historic landscapes and built space [3.2, 3.4 & 3.5], this group gained a sense of wellbeing, mental activity and positive sense of purpose through participation in the citizen researcher Map Book Project. Meeting

monthly at the Dolphin Arms in Kenton, a group of 10 volunteers from the local history society worked together over a period of 12 months, 2018–19. The group used the 1787 map book as the starting point for a project that mapped changes to their local spaces and places from the late eighteenth century through to the present day. The result was an exhibition curated by participants in the project. A launch party attended by 100+ castle staff and volunteers and hosted by the Earl of Devon was held in the library at Powderham in December 2019. The exhibition was then transferred to the local community centre and later placed on permanent display in the castle visitor centre. One of the members of the citizen humanities team wrote: *'my involvement in this project has certainly benefitted me, personally, in extending my interest in the history of the Courtenay family and also in the joys of undertaking research. Hopefully the end result will also benefit many of those who see it and find that it extends their knowledge concerning the history of the areas around Kenton and Powderham'*. Another participant, John Davis, wrote: *'The University of Plymouth by getting involved in this type of project has a great impact on people like me, retired with time on their hands: we benefit socially, as does the community at large which benefits from our time and experience. What Next?' [5.3, 5.7 & 5.8].*

2. Curatorial Staff, Guides and Visitors.

i. Curatorial Staff. Informed by our research on archives, gender, architecture and design, site-specific investigations of the castle's architectural history and archives have changed the way in which heritage at Powderham is managed by the castle's curatorial staff team of 4, and led to the site developing revised operation regulations and policies. These include a reassessment of the historic significance of Powderham as a site of display in the eighteenth century and the role of the 9th Earl in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century [3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5 & 3.6]. The Earl of Devon writes of the transformative impact of our research, which fed into long-term planning at the castle: *'this work has allowed us to revise our heritage management planning adding significantly to our understanding of the historic fabric of the site'*. The Earl commented further: *'The university has also been integral in encouraging a fresh understanding of our stories...with mentoring and support they have encouraged Derry [Heritage Manager] to undertake an MA in Heritage Management and a course in historic country houses. This is building his own strengths and developing the Powderham heritage business as a result'* [5.4, 5.7 & 5.8]. The castle Archivist also gained new understanding of archival sources and deposits as research on letters and manuscripts translated to cataloguing of archives and library. These actions will continue to feed into future operations, grant applications and heritage planning documents.

ii. Guides. Powderham's team of 12+ tour guides gained new knowledge and insights into how to present the history and heritage of the site through the introduction of a staff training programme and new tour manual and briefing packs based on research findings [5.4 & 5.7]. These resources focussing on the Georgian period and the LGBT+ history of the site changed the narratives the guides presented to the public as well as their own sense of the history of the Courtenay family and Powderham Castle [3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 & 3.6]. Training guides has proved a key means by which the themes and findings of our relatively small community group projects could be extended to a large, general audience year-on-year (see iii below). Visitor feedback collected by Powderham is highly positive. For 2019, 113/248 comments cited the tour as the best part of a visit. Typical comments for 2020 include: *'the staff cannot do enough to give their clear knowledge to visitors'* (August 2020).

iii. Visitors. The themes and findings explored in the projects run with the specific community groups discussed above also reached the c.30,000 annual general visitors to Powderham through a range of new interpretive elements based on or showcasing the projects (IE4). The aim of these was to inform and empower general visitors with new, inclusive ways of thinking about the country house that move beyond the conventional narratives of wealth, marriages and patriarchy [3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 & 3.6]. Besides training for guides, these include a regular presentations by Plymouth staff at Powderham's Heritage Open Days (c. 500 visitors per day), a Powderham edition of the *Histories of the Unexpected* podcast presented by James Daybell (2.5 million downloads), -

<https://play.acast.com/s/historioftheunexpected/thematerialworldofpowderham-acastle-ahorn-bookcaseandachair> - four thematic (subtitled) documentary films on our work with community groups screened to visitors while waiting for tours (including IE8, IE9), and a new public history website - <http://www.100objects.com> - showcasing new thinking by our students on the castle collections. A self-guided audio tour based on our historical research and community engagement was also introduced in June 2020 in response to Covid-19 restrictions on visitor numbers and the guided-tours. Visitor feedback comments on the audio tour collected by Powderham include: '*self-guided audio tour was exceptional* (August 2020).

3. UK and USA Historic Sites

Our research has also had some wider impact on historic houses elsewhere in the UK and USA through partnerships with Historic Houses (the UK body for independent historic house sites) and the Historic Preservation Program at the University of Pennsylvania:

(i) As the Earl of Devon writes, '*we have been able to encourage a wider partnership between Powderham Castle, Plymouth and Historic Houses...to disseminate the principles of co-production we have developed by working together over the past three years.*' Emma Robinson, Director of Policy and Public Affairs for Historic Houses, writes '*The partnership between the University of Plymouth and Powderham Castle is a shining example of collaboration bringing multiple benefits for both partners, and one which we at Historic Houses continue to highlight across our networks*'. Robinson confirms our work with Powderham has reached 1500 member properties as well as more than 160,000 individual members and followers (HH magazine, 60,000 subscribers; social media, 104,000 followers) through feature articles, talks at HH members' events and direct knowledge exchange between Powderham and other member sites. Robinson further states that these have directly resulted in similar activities at other historic sites such as Bell House, London. [5.4 & 5.5].

(ii) Through our partnership with the Historic Preservation Program at the University of Pennsylvania, our research has impacted the practice of 30+ American heritage professionals working with us at Powderham, bringing them new insights into the historic production of country houses and new ways of managing and interpreting historic sites, especially in terms of community engagement, hidden histories and hard to reach audiences [3.1 – 3.6]. These individuals are now working in the heritage sector throughout North America, including for example, Eastern State Penitentiary, Historic New England, and Stenton Historic Site in Philadelphia. Laura Keim, Curator of Stenton, attests '*Professor Daniel Maudlin's and Professor James Daybell's vision for the project and partnership has created collegial trans-Atlantic professional ties and shared knowledge from Devon to Pennsylvania...the knowledge they shared with me has directly and significantly affected my work as [a] Curator... The Penn-Plym-Powderham Project has also developed innovative new interpretation approaches to the castle's history that engage visitors and nearby residents in new ways*' [5.6]

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

- 5.1 Testimonial from Joanna Pine, Co-Director Pride in Plymouth and asylum seekers group
- 5.2 Testimonial from Sallie Rutledge, Director, The Mede, Exeter
- 5.3 Testimonials from citizen researchers (Kenton Past and Present Society)
- 5.4 Testimonial from the Earl and Countess of Devon
- 5.5 Testimonial from Historic Houses
- 5.6 Testimonial from Laura Keim, Stenton House, Pennsylvania
- 5.7 Powderham Project Report (Universities of Plymouth and Pennsylvania)
- 5.8 Powderham Public Engagement Pathways
- 5.9 Film of LGBT Project - <https://youtu.be/if8XlnZJ6QI>
- 5.10 Film of Dementia Project - <https://youtu.be/enfHkyH97Ag>