

<b>Institution:</b> University of Cambridge		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> History		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Remembering the Reformation		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2010-2018		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>  Prof Alexandra Walsham Dr Cerianne Law	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>  Professor of Modern History Postdoctoral Research Associate	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2010-ongoing 2016-2019
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2016-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>This case study concerns the impact of a major AHRC funded research project, 'Remembering the Reformation', coinciding with the 500th anniversary of the posting of Luther's 95 Theses in October 2017. The project has helped shape public understanding of the historical event now known as the Reformation by demonstrating the ways in which it has been remembered, forgotten, contested and reinvented since the sixteenth century. The impact was achieved through a major digital exhibition, educational activities and resources, engagement with curatorial staff in libraries, museums and archives, and public outreach through lectures, workshops, and media broadcasts.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The Reformation is deeply embedded in scholarly and popular consciousness as a critical turning point in Western history. The AHRC project underpinning this case study investigated how a complex, protracted, and unpredictable process crystallised as a transformative event and a chronological landmark. An interdisciplinary cross HEI partnership involving the historians Alexandra Walsham and Cerianne Law at Cambridge and the literary scholars Brian Cummings and Bronwyn Wallace at York, it analysed the creative mixture of remembering and forgetting through which the Reformation entered into the cultural imagination. Using England as a laboratory, it explored how the legacies of the Reformation and conflicts over its memory have continued to galvanise, trouble and fragment English society. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw ongoing struggles to implement, perfect and overturn the religious changes initiated by Henry VIII and his subjects in the 1530s. During this period a generation of participants in the Reformation gave way to generations whose memory of them was formed not by personal experience but by texts, images, artefacts, rituals and inherited traditions.</p> <p>The project also set these developments within a wider British and European perspective. Coinciding with the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the (possibly apocryphal) event that is widely regarded as the initial catalyst of the Protestant Reformation, the nailing of Martin Luther's 95 theses to the door of the Castle church in Wittenberg in 1517, it has helped to enhance understanding of the intersections between memory and identity formation in an international movement which crossed frontiers and bound together believers divided by borders, but which also took distinctive forms in different national environments. It has intervened in scholarly debates in the field of memory studies and fostered interdisciplinary approaches to the study of the Reformation. Through its outputs, notably public lectures and a permanent digital exhibition, it has raised</p>		

consciousness about the Reformation as a project to reform memory itself, as well as the roles of commemoration, celebration, amnesia, and oblivion in that process. It has illuminated how a series of enduringly influential myths about the English and European Reformations came into being. These include its status as a crucible of modernity and, in the case of England, the genesis of the idea of Anglicanism as a *via media* and of the Reformation as an act of liberation from the tyranny of foreign Roman jurisdiction. In a context in which the Henrician break with Rome has sometimes (misguidedly) been invoked as a precedent for Brexit, the project has also cast a spotlight on the influence and agency exerted by historical nostalgia and misremembering through the centuries.

Exploring the biographical, temporal, spatial, material, visual, literary, liturgical and bodily dimensions of Reformation cultures of memory and their afterlives, the project has involved research in a range of archives, museums and libraries and collaborative work with their staff. It has led to significant published outputs: a major digital exhibition incorporating more than 130 items from Cambridge University Library, Lambeth Palace Library, and York Minster Library; two volumes of academic essays; a monograph [R6]; articles in scholarly journals and edited collections (including [R3,5,6,&7]), print and online publications in newspapers, magazines, and the project website (<https://rememberingthereformation.org.uk>).

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

[R1] Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2011)

[R2] Alexandra Walsham, 'History, Memory and the English Reformation', *Historical Journal*, 55/4 (2012), pp. 899-938. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X12000362>.

[R3] Alexandra Walsham, 'Domesticating the Reformation: Material Culture, Memory and Confessional Identity in Early Modern England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 69/2 (2016): 566–616. <https://doi.org/10.1086/687610> [REF 2 submission]

[R4] Digital exhibition (Walsham, Law, Cummings and Wallace): <https://exhibitions.lib.cam.ac.uk/reformation/> (Published online September 2017)

[R5] Alexandra Walsham, 'Recycling the Sacred: Material Culture and Cultural Memory after the English Reformation', *Church History*, 86:Special 4 ([Church History in Commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation](#)) (2017), 1121–1154. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009640717002074>

[R6] Cerianne Law, *Contested Reformations in the University of Cambridge, 1535-1584* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2018). [REF 2 submission]

[R7] *Memory and the English Reformation*, ed. Alexandra Walsham, Bronwyn Wallace, Ceri Law and Brian Cummings (Cambridge, 2020).

#### Evidence of Quality:

All publications above were peer reviewed by major academic presses and scholarly journals, and therefore meet the 2\* minimum requirement.

Grant awarded: AHRC Standard Grant, 'Remembering the Reformation', £831,329 awarded to the University of Cambridge and the University of York, 1 January 2016-30 September 2019, PI: Alexandra Walsham. <https://internal.hist.cam.ac.uk/rememberingthereformation/index.html>

Leverhulme Trust, Major Research Fellowship, 'The Reformation of the Generations: Age, Ancestry and Memory in England, c. 1500-1700', £158,000 awarded to Alexandra Walsham, 1 October 2015-30 September 2018.

Walsham's *Reformation of the Landscape* was the winner of three major prizes: the Wolfson History Prize, the Leo Gershoy Award (American Historical Association), and the Roland Bainton Prize (Sixteenth Century Studies Society).

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

The research has influenced how the individuals and institutions that mediate and communicate memory of English religious history view the Reformation as a moment of profound religious and cultural rupture. By engaging with non-academic custodians and gatekeepers of collective memory, the project has raised public consciousness about how the Reformation has retrospectively been constructed as 'an historical event'. It has contributed to fostering critical awareness of the confessional myths and triumphalist narratives that still surround it. It has underlined the plurality, complexity and contingency of the Reformation; the trauma and violence that accompanied it; and the continuities that mitigated the dramatic changes it wrought. It has enhanced awareness of the ongoing process of remembering and reinventing the Reformation past to buttress the present and to set future agendas, and drawn attention to the strategies of amnesia and oblivion that were integral to the movement.

#### Shaping Public Understanding within Heritage Contexts and Faith Communities

The activities and outputs of the Remembering the Reformation have attracted considerable public attention. Launched in front of a large public audience in September 2017, the digital exhibition, involving more than 130 items from Cambridge University Library (CUL), York Minster Library (YML), and Lambeth Palace Library (LPL), was accompanied by a physical exhibition at LPL in August-November 2017, which was advertised and visited by over 2,000 people as part of the Lambeth Heritage Festival and Open House London and described as 'fascinating' and 'instructive' in written feedback [E3]. The digital exhibition has attracted more than 59,000 users from around the world, including France, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, and the US (who represent 35% of the total exceeding the figure of 32% from the UK) [E1]. Use peaked at 1,300 page views on 31 October 2017, the 800th anniversary of the day that Martin Luther reputedly nailed his 95 theses on the door of Wittenberg's castle church, an iconic event whose status as the birthdate of the Reformation the exhibition interrogated. In January 2020, over two years after the launch of the exhibition, traffic to the site accounted for 21% of all visits to the UL's virtual exhibitions pages over the previous twelve months, a figure described as a 'really amazing top line' by the UL's digital team. In March 2020, one of the items it featured – a bible embroidered by Mary Arbunot in the mid seventeenth century and preserved by her son as 'the gift of my dear and tender mother' – inspired a later descendant whose father was interested in the family's history to visit the UL to inspect it. She described her tactile encounter with the book as a very moving experience, which created a physical link with past generations and with her distant ancestor [E9].

The research has led to invitations to talk to non-academic audiences, including Historical Association groups in Norwich and Canterbury, well attended public lectures delivered by Walsham in California (May 2018) and Melbourne (March 2019), and requests for advice from television producers. She was involved in several high profile events during the anniversary year, including a symposium at St Margaret's Westminster on 31 October 2017, co-organised by the Church of England and the Council of Lutheran Churches, at which she spoke on 'Forgetting Luther', which was reported in the national and US press. She also participated in panel discussions at The National Archives [E5] and the German Embassy. A podcast of the former has been frequently downloaded and the ambassador described the latter as a 'deeply thought-provoking insight into the perception of the Reformation anniversary in Germany and the UK [E12]'. It set the scene perfectly for a look back at a decade of celebrations of the Luther

phenomenon and forward to the further impact of Luther and his legacy today'. Attendees at a public lecture at LPL in November 2018 not only came away better informed about the 'multiplicity of perspectives and contexts' that shaped the Reformation; they were also inspired to 'think about forgetting as a function of memory' [E3].

More generally, the project has shaped how faith communities understand and memorialise the divisive legacy of the Reformation. An ambitious day of family activities, organised in conjunction with Great St Mary's (GSM), Cambridge, in late October 2017, saw some 3,300 visitors of all ages pass through the church [E6]. Visitors were able to print their own memorial broadside using the CUL's historic wooden printing press. The day concluded with a dramatic historical re-enactment produced by HistoryNeedsYou (HNY) with input from Walsham and Law, whose research shaped a script that was designed to disrupt celebratory Protestant assumptions and engage with new audiences. This collaboration was described as 'invigorating' by HNY [E7]. One attendee commended the multidisciplinary approach, which 'really brings this seminal period and its fundamental issues of conscience to life'. A visitor from the Netherlands wrote that 'my personal Reformation jubilee has become unforgettable'. His experience of the day inspired him to use it as a model for elements of the official Dutch commemorations of the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-19), which he helped to coordinate [E8].

### **Educational Impact and Syllabus Enhancement**

The research underpinning this case study has also had a more direct educational impact at primary, secondary and tertiary level, stretching students and teachers beyond the National Curriculum and conventional syllabi. In addition to lectures delivered in secondary schools (e.g. in Guildford and Bedford), specially crafted sessions on Reformation visual propaganda and iconoclasm were devised for Key Stage 3 students as part of the Cambridge History for Schools programme in February 2017 and February 2019 [E2]. Participants commended them for 'showing a different perspective of the event than when we study it in school' and helping them to recognise how satirical representation in the sixteenth century has 'links to modern times'. By re-enacting the defacement of sacred pictures and finding to their surprise that this was 'actually fun', they gained insight into the mixed motivations of iconoclasts: 'it is really cool and sad to see what happened in the past'. GSM's outreach officer borrowed and adapted the first of these sessions for use in local Cambridge schools [E7].

Widely used by university lecturers for courses on the Reformation, the exhibition has established itself as an excellent teaching aid, revealing fresh dimensions of familiar topics and engaging students with the material remnants of religious change. A colleague from Sussex describes it as a 'brilliant' digital resource and reports that the seventeenth-century Luther and Calvin tobacco box led to stimulating seminar discussions about the ubiquity of the reformers' images in consumer culture and about 'the smell of the Reformation'. Described as 'haunting', mutilated liturgical books have inspired explorations of Protestantism's deliberate project of selectively forgetting the textual legacies of the Middle Ages.

### **Engaging Custodians of Memory: Librarians, Archivists, and Museum Curators**

This research has also afforded librarians, archivists, and curators important new insights into the collections they care for and shaped curatorial decision-making and practice. Through its collaborations with CUL, LPL and YML on the digital exhibition, 'Remembering the Reformation' has helped to contextualise the early printed books and manuscripts they hold and illuminated the afterlives of medieval texts and objects that survived the Protestant onslaught against remnants of 'superstition' and 'idolatry'. It has also underlined the extent to which such libraries and archives are themselves artefacts of Reformation memory: the disposal and retention of

medieval texts was shaped by Protestant priorities and modern collections are thus shaped by acts of selective remembering and forgetting. The Librarian at YML indicates that the 'overwhelmingly positive experience' of working with the project team has been vital in fulfilling YML's strategic aim to explore the values that shaped its collections, connect them to current issues, and interpret them for its users [E3]. A testimonial from CUL stresses the value of collaboration between readers and librarians, academics and curators, writing that it has 'paved the way for a more cross-institutional way of working, and provided tangible outputs around our collections for the international scholarly community' [E3]. LPL greatly valued the 'genuine dialogue' between the project team and library staff, contributing to the latter's professional development, and highlighted how the project helped highlight 'how historical narratives of the Reformation have been constructed, adapted and refashioned, leaving material traces in books and manuscripts'. [E3] Cathedral librarians who attended our workshop on 'Memory and the Library' in June 2016 were inspired with 'several ideas about how our collections might be used to engage the public'. Contacts with curatorial colleagues in the Fitzwilliam, Victoria and Albert Museum and Hamilton Kerr Institute have likewise enabled them to 'reconsider selected objects in a deeper historical context, drawing out their significance in relation to changing attitudes to faith', and underlining the importance of 'reconstructing the original setting for which such objects were created' (the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Research Curator, V&A [E4]). Murdoch has subsequently consulted closely with Walsham regarding two forthcoming physical exhibitions on English Catholic material culture and 'Making Time'. Walsham was also a member of the advisory board of the Auckland Castle Trust Faith galleries project, and two of its curators attended an academic workshop in October 2016, which 'transformed' how they planned to approach the galleries covering the Reformation era.

By challenging inherited assumptions that still colour perception of this iconic event and drawing attention to how it has been retrospectively constructed, 'Remembering the Reformation' has thus shaped how librarians, archivists, heritage professionals, faith communities, students, teachers, and members of the general public understand, communicate, and commemorate it.

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

- [E1] Digital exhibition page view and visitor figures [from CUL and Google analytics]
- [E2] Qualitative feedback from Schools workshops, project public events, GSM family day
- [E3] Testimonial letters from Lambeth Palace Library, York Minster Library, Cambridge University Library – major partners in exhibition
- [E4] Testimonial letter from the Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Research Curator V&A
- [E5] Marianne Wilson, 'Reformation on the Record: Developing the Reformation Programme at the National Archives', *Archives*, 54(1), pp. 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.3828/archives.2019.2>
- [E6] Testimonial letter from the churchwarden, Great St Mary's, Cambridge
- [E7] Testimonial letter from HistoryNeedsYou
- [E8] Emails from the professor of religious history VU University Amsterdam, one of the organising committee of the Synod of Dordrecht commemorations (1618-19)
- [E9] Email from a descendant of Mary Arbunot, owner and embroiderer of a seventeenth-century bible
- [E10] Independent citation in media
- [E11] Commemorative booklet on 'Liberated by God's Grace' Reformation anniversary symposium and report on website of Council for Lutheran Churches
- [E12] Letter from German ambassador to UK, regarding Reformation panel November 2017