

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> University of Central Lancashire		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 28 History		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Commemorating Peterloo, 1819-2019.		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2004-2019		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Robert Poole	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Guild Research Fellow / Professor of History	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 1 Jan 2013 to date
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2014-2020		
<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>The year 2019 saw the bicentenary of the 'Peterloo massacre', a formative event in the history of British democracy when a mass rally for parliamentary reform in Manchester was attacked by armed cavalry with hundreds of casualties. Poole has worked collaboratively with regional and national organisations, such as Manchester Histories, the John Rylands Library and the Peoples History Museum. As a consultant to the extensive HLF-funded commemorative programme in 2017-19, Poole has recovered, reinterpreted and disseminated source materials to honour and celebrate Peterloo through the co-production of new cultural artefacts, spanning a wide range of mediums. These materials have provided new forms of artistic and literary expressions. For example, through the creation of digital animations, museum exhibitions, a permanent memorial, a graphic novel and radio and television broadcasts. Poole's contributions to the commemoration of Peterloo has significantly influenced the bicentenary celebrations, with the Modern History Archivist at The John Rylands Library stating: '<b>Robert Poole was Peterloo</b>' [C2].</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Poole's 2019 book <i>Peterloo: the English Uprising</i> [1], was published by Oxford University Press a month before the bicentenary. It described a radical movement of national scope, centred on Regency Manchester, the product of war and politics as much as of industrialisation and poverty, moving from petitioning, through strikes and demonstrations, to near-insurrection. It surpassed previous accounts by integrating regional and national perspectives, giving equal weight to the actions of authorities and protestors, and identifying a strand of radical English patriotism. It was uniformly welcomed by reviewers in the press, academia and online. It featured in <i>History Today's</i> 'Books of the year' as '<b>the definitive account of Peterloo, and . . . a key text in the history of British politics and society</b>'. Drafts and chapters were made available in 2016-19 to those involved in the commemoration.</p> <p>'Petitioners and Rebels' [2] explained how the radical movement drew its force and legitimacy from mass petitioning of parliament over four years. A version was read at the <i>History of Parliament Trust's</i> 2015 conference at Westminster marking the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Magna Carta. 'The <i>Manchester Observer</i> 1818-22: biography of a radical newspaper' [3], a 35,000 word Open Access article, demonstrated that the <i>Observer</i> was the leading radical newspaper of its time. Described by a reviewer as '<b>a tour de force . . . scholarship of a high order</b>', it traced the relationship between the radical press and activists in both Lancashire and London, and showed how co-ordinated attempts by local and national government to suppress the paper were central to the repression of the movement. As described below, it was linked to a digitisation of a full set of the newspaper in which Poole was instrumental [C2, E].</p> <p><i>Return to Peterloo</i> [4], a themed and copiously illustrated volume of the <i>Manchester Region History Review</i>, was published in February 2014 for both regional and academic audiences. As editor, Poole commissioned ten contributions and supplied four pieces himself, including</p>		

the keynote article, 'What don't we know about Peterloo?' It was used by those involved in the commemoration alongside Poole's 2006 articles, 'The March to Peterloo' (*Past and Present*) and 'Peterloo Revisited' (*History*). 'Le Massacre de Peterloo' [5], first delivered to a conference at the Sorbonne in 2014, is the standard modern account in French. Finally, Poole was co-author of the graphic novel, *Peterloo: Witnesses to a Massacre* [6], a verbatim style account whose fully referenced text consisted mainly of words written or spoken at the time. It became the first graphic novel to be reviewed on the Institute for Historical Research's online *Reviews in History* site and has sold over 4,000 copies to date.

Recovery and accessible publication of source material was part of Poole's research project from the outset. A British Academy-funded digitisation and cataloguing project in 2013-14, 'Understanding the Home Office disturbances papers' (SG130774), was followed in 2015-18 by an AHRC collaborative doctoral project, 'Popular radicalism in the age of reform: government and localities, 1782-1832', both in collaboration with the University of Hertfordshire and the National Archives. 26,000 images were digitised and online catalogues for sixteen pieces (boxes) were created, together with a research guide. Key elements were transcribed and made publicly available through the wider Peterloo Witness Project.

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

1. Poole, Robert, *Peterloo: the English Uprising* (Oxford University Press, 2019) 978-0-19-878346-6
2. Poole, Robert, 'Petitioners and rebels: petitioning for parliamentary reform in Regency Britain', *Social Science History* 43, 3 (2019). ISSN 0145-5532
3. Poole, Robert, 'The Manchester Observer, 1818-1822: Biography of radical newspaper', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 95, 1 (Spring 2019), Open Access at open access at <https://www.manchesteropenhive.com/view/journals/bjrl/95/1/article-p30.xml>
4. Poole, Robert (ed.) *Return to Peterloo*. Manchester Region History Review, xxiii Feb. 2014 for 2012 (Manchester Centre for Regional History/Carnegie) ISBN 978-1-85936-225-9/ISSN 0952-4320 (published February 2014)
5. Poole, Robert, Le massacre de Peterloo et le mouvement pour la démocratie en Angleterre au début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, in *Les mondes britanniques: Une communauté de destins?* (University of Rennes Press, 2018) 978-2-75357-485-4
6. Poole Robert, Schlunke, Eva, and Polyp, *Peterloo: Witnesses to a Massacre* (Myriad/New Internationalist, 2019). 978-1-78026-475-2.

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

#### **Enhancing cultural preservation through the Peterloo archives**

The Peterloo bicentenary programme was underpinned by Poole's 2012-19 Peterloo Witness Project, to bring together and publish the wealth of primary source material in the National Archives, the Parliamentary Archives, and various local and regional collections. Over 60 volunteers and four university-funded research assistants worked with Poole to transcribe 430 eye-witness accounts and compile definitive lists of casualties, troops, special constables, and others who were present. Workshops were held at the Manchester Histories Festivals (2012-14), the People's History Museum (PHM) (2015), the National Archives (2016), and in training sessions for the volunteer Peterloo Ambassadors (2018-19). [C1] The material was posted online and was extensively drawn on for many of the projects in the bicentenary programme [A, B]. It has been deposited with Manchester Library & Archives Service. In addition, Poole has assisted groups of volunteers at Oldham and Stockport Local Studies libraries in transcribing long runs of local source material from the National Archives. Finally, he obtained from private hands the only full set of the Manchester Observer newspaper [3], which were donated to the John Rylands Library where it was digitised to a high standard and made available free online [E]. This collaboration has enhanced the cultural preservation of this key resource, which was previously absent from the historical

record and provided a new mechanism for historical interpretation of this important period in history.

### **Influencing the design and delivery of the school curriculum to teach Peterloo**

One well-recognized issue addressed from an early stage was the lack of resources and expertise to teach Peterloo in schools. Poole presented four subject workshops for early career teachers at the Prince's Teaching Institute in 2013-15; advised and appeared in a 2015 BBC Schools TV programme on Peterloo, *Exploring the Past: Protest* [J]; co-authored guides to teaching Peterloo for *Teaching History* magazine in 2019; worked with the National Archives to produce sources and commentary for its 'Reform and Protest 1815-20' website (12,176 page views July 2017 to February 2020) [H]; assisted the Historical Association's 'Age of Revolutions' with online Peterloo materials [I]; gave plenary lectures to teachers' conferences run in 2019 by the 'Age of Revolutions' project and the Schools History Project; and worked with Manchester Histories and the PHM on a wide range of educational events and resources [A, B]. In 2015-17 he worked with the digital animator Ocean CAD and English Heritage to develop an historically accurate animation of Peterloo, distributed on Vimeo (2 formats, 1,372 views by July 2020) [G]. In 2019 Manchester Histories, the body who runs the festival and Peterloo commemoration events, donated copies of the Peterloo graphic novel to every school in Greater Manchester, while the 'Age of Revolutions' project commissioned a school's version [I]. The Institute of Education, University of London, has used both versions as the basis for visually driven lessons in issues of historical interpretation for Year 8 pupils [K]. The Peterloo Memorial Campaign twitter feed [B] in May-July 2019 carried examples of school projects based on this material. Following Poole's contributions to the success of the Peterloo programmes, the PHM (close partners with Manchester Histories) in its 2020 Impact Report adopted as one of its strategic goals for the next decade: **'To lead a national programme to promote the history and battles for democracy'**, and **'to help every school in Greater Manchester to engage with democracy'** [L].

### **Supporting new forms of artistic expression in the commemoration of Peterloo**

Poole has given sustained support to creative arts projects on Peterloo. These included the 2013 Manchester Library Theatre Company production 'Manchester Sound – the Massacre' whose theme of the right to protest paired the summer of protest of 1819 with the 'Summer of Love' of 1989, and public readings of Shelley's Peterloo poem 'The Masque of Anarchy' by the Rochdale Choir of the Unspoken Voice (an adult literacy initiative) at the Co-op Heritage Trust and Manchester Histories Festival in 2014. He gave early advice to the feature film 'Peterloo' (released November 2018), taking director Mike Leigh and historical consultant Jackie Riding on a tour of the site and later visiting the set. As historical consultant to the HLF-funded project by ReelMcr 'Our Sam – Middleton Man' in 2017-19 [F], he provided extensive support to a group of young people from deprived backgrounds making a one-hour film drama about the Middleton Peterloo reformer, Samuel Bamford. **'Doctor Robert was absolutely brilliant with the young people,'** wrote the director, **'he really kept them engaged throughout'** [C3]. The premiere in April 2019 played to 500 people, followed by other showings and an online release. [C3, F]. Among the arts events to which he contributed as part of the 2019 programme were the BFI Film school in Manchester; the 'Soapbox' project to provide a platform for young people's voices; the touring folk opera 'Rising Up – Peterloo'; the Radio 3 live broadcast 'A Poet Laureate's Peterloo'; the Streetwise Opera production 'Protest Music', whose head of programme wrote: **'Manchester Histories . . . brought a real level of historical depth to the project (augmented by an excellent talk from Historian Robert Poole)'** [B]; and the main open-air 'From the Crowd' event at the site of the massacre on 16 August 2019.

### **Memorialising and commemorating Peterloo**

Poole has a long-standing commitment to commemorating Peterloo, dating back to 2007. He advised Manchester City Council on the wording of the new plaque placed on the site (including the phrase 'pro-democracy reformers'). In 2009, Poole advised the John Rylands

Library in a successful attempt to get the Peterloo Relief Book onto the first UNESCO 'Memory of the World' register and joined the first commemorative annual march from Middleton to Manchester. Poole's continuous commitment to the commemoration of Peterloo, also saw him take part in the bicentenary commemorative march in 2019. The 2015 Peterloo Picnic, 2016 Peterloo Tapestry and 2017 Peterloo Names events drew extensively on historic material to engage people and drew crowds of 1-2,000 to central Manchester. [D]

From 2014 to 2019 Poole was consultant historian to the Peterloo 2019 programme, managed by Manchester Histories in partnership with the People's History Museum and supported by the University of Manchester. In the second phase from 2017-19 he was seconded from his university for 16 days. 46 cultural institutions in the Manchester region and 50 community groups took part in a programme of over 180 events. There was a strong emphasis on diversity and social inclusion, reflecting the fact that the boroughs at the centre of the pro-democracy movement in 1819 (Oldham, Rochdale, and Manchester) today contain some of the most deprived districts in the UK. Poole's understanding of the reform campaign of 1816-19 as a community-based pro-democracy movement was expressed in the programme's core rationale: **'The Peterloo 2019 programme was underpinned by three central themes: Protest, Democracy, Freedom of Speech. It explored issues of contemporary relevance linked to the events 200 years ago, including democracy, political participation and citizenship.'** [C1]

Poole worked closely with the Digital Assets Steering Group on the content of the Peterloo1819 website, which was centred on an adaptation of the digital animation [G] and fed by a searchable database of eye-witness accounts and casualties which he supplied [A,1]. It had 48,000 visits in March-August 2019 and was a key resource for media and partners. [B, 37-8] He advised all the main exhibitions at: Gallery Oldham, Rochdale Touchstones (both of which made large-scale use of words and pictures from the graphic novel) the PHM, the John Rylands Library, and Manchester Art Gallery. The Gallery Oldham exhibition attracted 39,883 visitors over four months, a 10% increase over the same period in 2018. The Rylands wrote, **'Our Peterloo exhibition was the most successful we have hosted, and Robert Poole was integral to its success'** [C2]. He also provided all the historical information and wording for the GBP1,000,000 permanent memorial on the site of the massacre commissioned by Manchester City Council and designed by the Turner prizewinning artist Jeremy Deller. Despite bad weather, its unveiling on 16 August 2019, accompanied by the 'From the Crowd' event, attracted a crowd of over 5,000 people, before being repeated twice. The CEO of Manchester Histories writes: **'Robert's commitment, knowledge and passion in supporting the programme of work has been outstanding and a real asset in ensuring the history of Peterloo was as accurate as possible from a historical context'** [B].

The Peterloo commemorations attracted extensive media attention, dominating regional news programmes and being covered by BBC News, Newsnight, Sky News, and much of the national press. Peterloo and its commemoration featured in episode one of Simon Schama's BBC series *The Romantics* (Sept. 2020) and in Alice Roberts' Channel 4 series *Britain's Most Historic Towns* (Oct. 2020). Poole contributed to episode seven of Melvin Bragg's 2018 Radio 4 series *The North*. Peterloo was the theme of Marketing Manchester's 2019 promotional film, broadcast in full on ITV as well as online [A]. Manchester Central Library, the hub of the commemoration, saw an 11% increase in visitor numbers over the summer months compared with 2018 (itself a record year) [B]. The bicentenary programme won the Outstanding Public and Community Engagement Initiative Award at the University of Manchester awards in May 2020. The 2019 exhibition *'Disrupt: Peterloo and protest'* on which he advised saw 98,000 visitors in 12 months and helped to gain the PHM the 'Best Cultural Venue' award at the 2019 Manchester Culture Awards. *The Peterloo Descendants Project*, on which Poole was historical advisor, won the People's Award and has been shortlisted for the 2020 Times Higher 'Research Project of the Year' award. The John Rylands Library's testimonial concludes: **'Peterloo captured the imagination. It was truly**

an exercise in popular history and one which returned the story of the massacre to the people of Manchester. At the heart was the scholarship, knowledge and indefatigable work of Robert Poole. . . . Robert Poole was Peterloo' [C2].

### **Public Engagement to Disseminate Peterloo**

During the REF period Poole has given over 100 public talks and academic papers on Peterloo-related topics. 66 were in 2019 alone, to a total audience of between 2,500 and 3,000 people, including a sell-out programme of talks at libraries in all ten Greater Manchester boroughs. He featured prominently on the two-part Radio 4 Documentary 'Peterloo: the Massacre that Changed Britain' and the live Radio 3 broadcast 'A Poet Laureate's Peterloo' (4, 11 & 17 August. 2019), and was interviewed by BBC News 24 (16 August). He contributed podcasts to *BBC History Extra*, *HistoryHitTV*, and the website *Five Books*. An article for *The Conversation* received over 9,000 reads in August 2019, 80% of them from outside the UK. Among conferences, Poole reached extended audiences when giving the annual public Byron Lecture at the British Association for Romantic Studies international conference, University of Nottingham; speaking at a public panel at the International Conference on Romanticism, University of Manchester (released online); and addressing the February 2019 *Historical Fictions* conference at Manchester Central Library, part of the UNESCO City of Literature programme. He spoke at the public 'Remembering Peterloo' event organised by the History of Parliament Trust at Westminster Hall in July 2019, in association with the 'Parliament and Peterloo' exhibition (featured in Radio 4's 'Today in parliament' on 12 July). 'This featured the 70 previously unknown petitions by victims of Peterloo discovered by Poole in the Parliamentary Archives, several of which were dramatised on video by actors. These were in turn used in the successful online course 'Peterloo to the Pankhursts' developed by Royal Holloway and the PHM, which had over 8,000 enrolments by the end of 2020 [M].

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

- A. Manchester Histories/Peterloo 2019 website, with links to reports, videos, projects & events. <https://peterloo1819.co.uk/>
- B. Manchester Histories, Peterloo 2019 programme Report. Pdf.
- C. Testimonial Letters
  - C1. from Karen Shannon, Director, Manchester Histories, Oct. 2019. Pdf.
  - C2. John Rylands Library, Special Collections, Manchester. Pdf.
  - C3. Jacqui Carroll, Founder and Creative Producer, ReelMcr, May 2019. Pdf.
- D. Peterloo Memorial Campaign Website, with links to resources, events 2007-2019, and information. <http://www.peterloomassacre.org/index.html>
- E. John Rylands Library, Peterloo collection, including online *Manchester Observer*. <http://luna.manchester.ac.uk/luna/servlet/Manchester~24~24>
- F. 'Our Sam Middleton Man' project Facebook page <https://en-gb.facebook.com/OurSamTheMiddletonMan/>
- G. Peterloo 1819 Animation on YouTube (2 versions) with info on no of downloads. <https://vimeo.com/209772068>
- H. National Archives Peterloo educational resources. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/protest-democracy-1818-1820/>
- I. Schools version of the Peterloo graphic novel, Historical Association 'Age of Revolution' site. <https://ageofrevolution.org/the-peterloo-graphic-novel-available-free-to-schools-now/>
- J. BBC Schools Programme on Peterloo, 'Exploring the Past', 2015. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p02jq2hp>
- K. 'Interpreting Peterloo', History in Education group, UCI Institute of Education. <https://londonhiesig.wordpress.com/interpreting-peterloo/>
- L. People's History Museum Impact Report 2020, '10 years of inspiring action, reaching out, making a difference, creating tomorrow's voters.'
- M. <https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/peterloo-to-the-pankhursts-radicalism-and-reform-in-the-nineteenth-century>