

<b>Institution:</b> University of Nottingham		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UOA29 Classics		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Adding value to heritage through community empowerment		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2006-2020		
<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>
Prof. Will Bowden Dr Chris King	Prof. of Roman Archaeology Assistant Professor	01.04.2006-present 01.01.2011-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> August 2013 – 31 December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>Research projects at the nationally significant sites of Caistor Roman town (Norfolk) and Southwell (Notts) have led to the development of two thriving community archaeology groups and provided a model for sustainable and equitable engagement between HEIs and community groups. Research co-produced with community volunteers has improved the understanding, protection and management of these important historic sites and allowed the groups to become sustainable independent bodies with collective grant capture of £175K. This has resulted in a shift in power dynamics, which has had long-lasting benefits for community engagement and public understanding of the past as it enabled the role of volunteers to change from that of participants, where the agendas are set by outside agencies, to that of drivers of project development. To this end Bowden and King's work has led to the:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Creation of sustainable grass-roots heritage organizations</li> <li>2) Co-production of research</li> <li>3) Training and community empowerment</li> <li>4) Sharing of best practice for community archaeology</li> <li>5) Improved management of nationally significant sites</li> <li>6) Enhanced public understanding of heritage</li> </ol>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Since 2006, Bowden's Caistor Roman Town Project has focused on the remains of <i>Venta Icenorum</i> (Caistor St. Edmund) in Norfolk, with research based on excavation within and around the Roman town and geophysical survey covering over 60 hectares. This research charted the chronology, development and function of <i>Venta Icenorum</i>, and the ways in which the region's inhabitants responded to the introduction of urbanism. This has implications for understanding the relationship between Rome and the peoples of its provinces. In particular the research showed that although the Roman town's gridded street plan and masonry public buildings reflect new concepts of settlement planning, it is clear that a distinct local identity was retained (3.4, 3.5). In addition, the project located significant post-Roman settlement, demonstrating that <i>Venta</i> remained a major centre as late as the 8<sup>th</sup> century before it was ultimately superseded by the development of Norwich (3.6). The project, supported by grants totalling over £350K from the British Academy, AHRC and others, resulted in multiple peer-reviewed articles (e.g. 3.4, 3.5, 3.6).</p> <p>A key aspect of the research strategy at Caistor was the embedding of community participation in the management of the project, with over 100 local volunteers involved in the initial surveys and excavations from 2006-12. In 2009 Bowden and his community co-workers established Caistor Roman Project Ltd (CRP) as a charitable company limited by guarantee to facilitate volunteer involvement in the research project and excavations. This move formalised the role of the community group and provided the basis of ongoing critical assessment of the role of academics in community archaeology. A 14-year long collaboration has resulted in research contextualising the success of the Caistor model against the dominant top-down (university led) approaches and bottom-up (community led) alternatives to participatory archaeology. This has demonstrated that successful collaboration between HEIs and community stakeholders is enhanced by deconstructing and challenging the hierarchical relationship between academics and volunteers that are often both implicit and explicit in such collaborations (3.1).</p> <p>With equitable access to production of knowledge at heart of the Caistor initiative, from 2013 research led by CRP members has built upon the results of Bowden's original project. In</p>		

collaboration with Bowden, CRP has focused on the complex post-Roman history of the site with additional ongoing work on an extra-mural temple site, with the aim of understanding the long-term history of the town's landscape context. This activity of CRP represents co-production of primary research funded by major grant-giving bodies and undertaken by community volunteers with training and support from Bowden.

The Caistor model, described by Historic England as “*an excellent example of what community archaeology can achieve*” (D), has been adapted and applied to archaeological investigations in Southwell, Nottinghamshire. This research aimed to investigate, first the relationship between a major Roman villa and the Saxon and later Minster established adjacent to its remains and second the development of the medieval town in relation to the Minster (3.3). With three rounds of AHRC *Connected Communities* funding between 2012 and 2014 and a grant from English Heritage in 2012 (I), UoN academics, particularly King, collaborated with the Southwell Community Archaeology Group (SCAG) on investigating this through excavation, archival research and study of vernacular buildings (3.2, 3.3). The research has produced greater understanding of Southwell's development as a poly-focal settlement around the ecclesiastical focus and identified a significant number of medieval structures hidden behind later brick frontages, highlighting its wider significance as one of the East Midlands' best preserved historic urban centres.

This research has enhanced the understanding of two nationally important sites with complex Roman to medieval sequences, while at the same time carefully developing community ties, which resulted in a model for university-instigated, community-led archaeology, with a critical reflection on the process constituting research in its own right.

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

1. **BOWDEN, W.** 2020 'What is the role of the academic in community archaeology? The changing nature of volunteer participation at Caistor Roman Town', *Journal of Community Archaeology and Heritage* 7 (online only) DOI: 10.1080/20518196.2020.1797299
2. **KING, C.** 2019 'The timber-framed buildings of Southwell, Nottinghamshire', *Vernacular Architecture* 50: 18-39 DOI 10.1080/03055477.2019.1665930
3. **BOWDEN, W.** 2017 'From villa to Minster at Southwell', in J. Mitchell, J. Moreland and B. Leal (eds) *Encounters, Excavations and Argosies: Essays for Richard Hodges*, Oxford: 56-72 ISBN 9781784916817
4. **BOWDEN W.** 2013a 'The urban plan of Venta Icenorum and its relationship with the Boudican revolt', *Britannia* 44: 145-169 DOI: 10.1017/S0068113X13000184
5. **BOWDEN, W.** 2013b 'Townscape and identity at Caistor-by-Norwich', in H. Eckardt and S. Rippon (eds) *Living and working in the Roman world*, JRA Suppl. Ser. 95. Portsmouth (R.I), 47-62 ISBN 9781887829953
6. **BOWDEN, W.** and **BESCOBY, D.** 2013 'The detection and mapping of Saxon sunken-featured buildings at Caistor St Edmund', *Archaeological Prospection* Vol 20 (No 1), 53-7 DOI: 10.1002/arp.1441

### Selected grants that underpin the research conducted:

- I. PI Bowden, *The Caistor Roman Town Project*, British Academy Research Development Award (BARDA 52858) (May 2010 - April 2013): £67,734
- II. PI Bowden, *A town of the Iceni*, British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship (MD140050) (Sept 2015 - Aug 2016): £100,673.80
- III. PI King, *Early Fabric in Historic Towns: Southwell*, English Heritage (6892) (Dec 2012 – July 2014): £12,071
- IV. CI King, *Writing Our History and Digging Our Past: Phase 2*, AHRC Connected Communities (AH/K007696/1) (Feb 2013 - Dec 2013): £69,127
- V. PI Bowden, *Developing immersive experience at Caistor Roman Town*, AHRC Next Generation of Immersive Experiences (AH/R009953/1) (April 2018 – Nov 2018): £60,148

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

There are over 2000 community archaeology groups in the UK alone and more than 40% have had some contact with universities. However, existing scholarship on community archaeology highlights the often-unequal relationships between academics and volunteer archaeologists (3.1). The UoN research at Caistor and Southwell directly addresses this, creating a model for community archaeology in which the role of volunteers is changed from that of participants to that of drivers of project development and genuine co-producers of new knowledge. This has directly

resulted in thriving community groups that are both successful and sustainable and has further resulted in six linked strands of impact:

1. Creation of sustainable grass-roots heritage organizations - The UoN research projects at Caistor and Southwell supported by local and national funders (including the British Academy, AHRC and English Heritage) led to the formal establishment of community archaeology groups as charitable bodies (CRP and SCAG) in which Bowden has a formal trustee role (A, B) (3.1). CRP developed directly through Bowden's research project at Caistor, with Bowden noted as "*instrumental in establishing a community archaeology group*" (A), while SCAG developed initially as a community group responding to the threat of development on the site of the town's Roman villa (aided by Bowden), before beginning to undertake fieldwork (in collaboration with King) (B). Both groups now function as fully independent bodies able to raise funds to support training and research projects in their own right. CRP's chair notes "*we have been able to increasingly take on the management and planning of vital research activities*" (A). Current memberships standing at 110 (CRP) and 50 (SCAG). Since August 2013 CRP have raised over £115K, including three HLF/NHLF grants (E 9, 20, I), while SCAG have raised over £50K (including two HLF grants), becoming a charitable incorporated group in 2015 (B). This has allowed the groups to develop and sustain significant programmes of research that also provide the framework for training members in excavation and recording techniques and outreach activity (E). These projects are community-led, with ongoing support by UoN staff members in fundraising, delivery and publication. To provide long-term sustainability both groups maintain physical premises for finds processing, storage, workshops and training, without which ongoing community archaeology would not be possible. Both groups also run trips and host programmes of talks, which along with post-excavation work ensure year-round activity for members and allow participation for those physically unable to undertake active fieldwork. The importance of such remote participation was recognised in 2020 with a successful bid for NHLF Heritage Emergency funds to redevelop CRP's website to maintain the group's online activities in the pandemic and beyond (J).

2. Co-production of research - The community groups' activities (encompassing excavation, geophysics, building recording, and field survey) have created significant research data. The agendas for this research develop and respond to those of the original UoN projects, notably relating to the extra-mural landscape and post-Roman period at Caistor (3.4, 3.5, 3.6) and the Roman villa and medieval built environment at Southwell (3.2, 3.3). Research questions are established collaboratively with participation of UoN staff, enabling the work to be situated within national and international scholarly and methodological frameworks. Key examples include SCAG's survey of Southwell's medieval and post-medieval vernacular buildings (G) and excavations and surveys of Roman and medieval remains at Vicars Court, and CRP's investigations of Roman and post-Roman extra-mural sites including the Roman town ditches and extra-mural temple (I, J). Historic England note that CRP have "*played an important role in advancing wider understanding of the extensive archaeological landscape at and around Venta Icenorum (which is one of the most significant Roman-period heritage assets in the East of England)*" (D). SCAG also successfully applied for funding from the Thoroton Society for professional support to further their study of the rare Tudor wall-paintings in the Saracen's Head hotel, the importance of which was highlighted by SCAG's buildings study (B).

The work of both CRP and SCAG has fed directly into the Historic Environment Record (HER) (the national record of the historic landscape) and updates on work have appeared in journals such as *Britannia* and the *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, demonstrating the groups' abilities to produce and contribute to academic outputs. The importance of co-production is acknowledged by all participants, with SCAG's chair commenting that the "*non-patronising approach to partnership working ... is to be celebrated and in no small part emanates from the group's confident engagement with the University*" (B).

3. Training and community empowerment - Equipping the volunteer communities with new skills and providing valuable personal and professional experience have been transformative for those involved. CRP members (currently 110) have been trained in all aspects of the archaeological process from project design to report-writing (E, 4-5, 16, I). For SCAG, training and project development fostered by King under the AHRC *Connected Communities* project,

*Writing Our History, Digging Our Past* (created to build capacity for community heritage), led directly to the group's applications for HLF funding (B). In addition, King's successful application for an English Heritage *Early Fabric in Historic Towns* grant enabled SCAG to be provided with training in building recording by specialists from Trent and Peak Archaeology, resulting in a reconnaissance survey of the town centre and in-depth recording of 20+ buildings by the group (G).

Within CRP, volunteers of diverse backgrounds have taken on trustee and leadership roles within the group, driving activities such as educational outreach with schools and fundraising as well as archaeological research (E, I, 6, 7). One volunteer (a former builder) is now working as a professional archaeologist (I, 2), while another completed her PhD on Roman artefacts at Nottingham in 2018. Having volunteers playing such leadership roles challenges the implicit hierarchies in the profession and ensures the long-term viability of the groups. Testimonies from volunteers evidence the value of new skills and confidence gained attested by one CRP member who notes "*I have acquired many archaeological skills and this year ... I learned a great deal about looking after and recording a large trench. But what I love most of all is the camaraderie*" (E, 20). This last aspect emphasises the wider social value of such involvement, evidenced particularly during the first 2020 lockdown in which CRP volunteers created a daily newsletter and online activities to combat isolation among the group members.

4. Sharing of best practice for community archaeology - The work of CRP has inspired the development of new community initiatives at other major sites in Norfolk and the adoption of improved fieldwork practice within existing groups. The director of the Norfolk Archaeological Trust (NAT), who own the Roman town, notes that "*CRP volunteers played an integral part in NAT's delivery of a recent NLHF project, 'Imagined Land' through mentoring members of the public who took part in test-pit programmes at two of NAT's other sites, Tasburgh Enclosure, and Burnham Norton Friary*" (H). CRP volunteers also worked with American Veterans for Archaeological Recovery at Dickleburgh in Norfolk, which uses archaeology in the recuperation of injured service personnel and veterans (E, 35) and had planned activities (delayed by Covid 19) with Operation Nightingale, the similar initiative by the Ministry of Defence. Similarly, SCAG (helped by King) provided practical demonstrations for CRP members of standing building survey techniques, which subsequently developed into a significant strand in CRP's work following the SCAG format (E, 41). Through the *Connected Communities* project SCAG's chair was funded by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement to share the group's experience at the *Living Knowledge 6 Copenhagen* Conference where he "*was able to share ... project experience with an international audience and gain valuable insights into the practices of other groups*" (B). The work of CRP and SCAG's volunteers also thereby enhances the capacity of an increasingly stretched professional heritage sector to deliver training in basic archaeological methodologies.

5. Improved management of nationally significant sites - The work of CRP and SCAG, in collaboration with UoN, informs ongoing conservation, heritage management and visitor interpretation and engagement strategies for these locally and nationally significant archaeological sites. The groups work with local government bodies (South Norfolk Council, Southwell Town Council, Norfolk and Nottinghamshire's Historic Environment Service), local heritage organizations (e.g. Norfolk Archaeological Trust, Norfolk Museums Service, the Southwell Civic Society and the Southwell Heritage Trust) and national bodies such as Historic England to ensure maximum impact of research findings and public engagement. CRP's 2016 geophysical survey led to a major expansion of the Scheduled Monument at Caistor by Historic England, ensuring enhanced protection from heritage crime and mechanized agriculture, while work at an extra-mural temple in 2018-19 added significant new data to another Scheduled Monument providing key information for future management (D). Historic England state that CRP's "*local communication and advocacy of the site has been of considerable benefit to us in that they are able to demonstrate the importance of the archaeology and its value at a peer-to-peer level*" (D). SCAG members have played an active role in Local Neighbourhood plans, most recently in debates about the archaeological impact of proposed flood mitigation measures in the town (B). Finally, SCAG and Bowden campaigned to raise public awareness of the significance of Southwell's Roman villa, which



was under threat from development. This directly resulted in the development site being purchased by a benefactor in 2015 at an estimated cost of £2 million and presented to the Chapter of Southwell Minster for use for educational, conservation and cultural purposes (C). SCAG members and Bowden now sit on a working group tasked with developing the site's use as a cultural resource for Southwell. SCAG's chair notes that "*Professor Bowden's support for the group in constructing the argument for the national heritage value of the site's Roman villa, was a key element in the eventual securing of the site's long-term future and protection from development*" (B).

6. Enhanced public understanding of heritage - The activities of Bowden and King with the two groups have involved extensive outreach both within local communities and for the wider body national and international public visitors. This has resulted in the development of new visitor engagement projects including the writing of a new guidebook (F) and installation of new display panels at Caistor funded by Natural England, VR apps supported by Natural England and the AHRC (H), popular publications on Southwell's vernacular architecture (G) and the site of Southwell's Burgage, and interpretation panels for Southwell's Roman villa. CRP's and SCAG's method (mentored by UoN staff) of excavating test-pits in gardens have also provided a tangible means by which the public can engage with the heritage on their doorstep and both groups have gained new members through this (I, 1-2, 3. The work of CRP has featured prominently in national publications such as *British Archaeology* and *Current Archaeology* and both groups receive frequent coverage in local print and broadcast media (I). Caistor's owners (NAT) acknowledge that "*the volunteer support provided by CRP is invaluable, providing effective outreach to our visitors and to educational institutions which NAT could not otherwise provide*" (H).

Volunteers now regularly deliver public talks for other archaeological groups, lead guided walks at Caistor and Southwell, offer workshops, run events for local schools and organizations such as the Young Archaeologists Club and regularly deliver activities for events such as Heritage Open Days, Norwich Science Festival, and the Festival of Archaeology (E, 17, 41). 12 CRP members have been professionally trained as School Facilitators and run archaeology activities for primary school children from 3 schools from Years 2-6 (E, 29, 46). These have proved popular with one teacher commenting that "*our visit to Caistor and having the team coming into our school brought an extra dimension to our Roman unit. The team were knowledgeable, friendly and entertaining and the activities stimulated great discussions among our pupils*".

This public outreach by members both informs the public but also delivers benefits to members themselves. One CRP member said "*I particularly enjoyed speaking to visiting members of the public during our open afternoon and re-discovered something of my long-lost confidence – never be afraid to step outside your comfort zone and take on a new challenge*" (E, 20). Group members thus not only participate in fieldwork but also help to shape the narratives through which a wider public gain their understanding of the past.

In summary, Bowden and King's work demonstrates that academics can help empower local communities to take ownership of archaeological research and bring their history to life in an engaging, authentic and meaningful way.

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

- A: Statement from CRP chair on Bowden's role in establishing and supporting CRP
- B: Statement from SCAG chair on Bowden and King's roles in SCAG's development
- C: Statement on donation of Minster School site
- D: Statement from Historic England regarding impact on management of Roman town
- E: CRP annual reports (2015-2019) (activities, business plans and volunteer testimonies)
- F: Guidebook for Caistor written by Bowden, funded by Norfolk Arch Trust and UoN
- G: Popular book on Southwell's architecture, resulting from King's Historic England project
- H: Statement from Director of Norfolk Archaeological Trust regarding role of CRP
- I: Selected media from Caistor
- J: Pages from CRP website, funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund