

Institution: Lancaster University		
Unit of Assessment: 27, English Literature and Language		
Title of case study: New Ways of Interpreting William Wordsworth's Poetry: Increasing Public Understandings, Improving Heritage Interpretations, Enhancing Cultural Offerings		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005 to 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 Bushell Simon Bainbridge	Professor Professor	May 2000 to present August 2004 to present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: October 2013 to December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Professors Bainbridge's and Bushell's research on William Wordsworth's poetry has enriched the learning and cultural experience of a range of beneficiaries, many new to one of Britain's most important writers. The research has benefited more than 143,000 people in 93 countries who have engaged with it through a range of forms designed to make it accessible to wide and diverse audiences, including online education courses, exhibitions, events, talks and interactive walks. It has reached further audiences in excess of 68 million people through extensive global media coverage. It has enhanced the Lake District's cultural offering and tourist experience and improved heritage interpretation through collaboration in the Wordsworth Trust's GBP 6.2 million 'Reimagining Wordsworth' project to redesign its visitor site and museum in Grasmere, Cumbria.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>A sustained body of research by Bainbridge and Bushell has provided new insights into Wordsworth's writing as part of the research and impact strategy of Lancaster University's Wordsworth Centre, which since its formation in 1987 has aimed to promote the poet's work to a wider, non-academic audience. Latterly, the research insights have been developed through collaboration with the Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere in the Lake District, with which Lancaster has had a formal partnership agreement since 2010. This has made it possible for the research to draw on the Trust's collections (which include 90% of the poet's manuscripts), curatorial expertise and knowledge of its users. The research has 3 major overlapping foci, as follows:</p>		
<p>i) <u>The value of manuscript study:</u> Over 20 years, Bushell has pioneered the study of Wordsworth's manuscripts as both an editor and a literary critic. She has co-edited the final volume of the prestigious Cornell Series of Wordsworth, <i>The Excursion</i> (2007), published major peer-reviewed studies such the AHRC-funded monograph <i>Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson and Dickinson</i> (2009) [R1] and led projects such as <i>From Goslar to Grasmere</i> [R2,G1]. Between 2005 and 2009, she analysed Wordsworth's manuscripts to develop a new research method for compositional materials involving full understanding of manuscript materiality and context, including the landscape around Grasmere and the importance of space and place for Wordsworth's poetry. Since 2005, she has worked consistently with the Wordsworth Trust's Curator and Head of Learning to design ways of making manuscript materials accessible to different audiences and to create methods for the appreciation and understanding of manuscripts by non-scholars.</p>		
<p>ii) <u>Wordsworth in historical context, especially as a war poet:</u> Bainbridge is recognised as a world leading scholar of the literary responses to the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. In the essay 'War' in <i>William Wordsworth in Context</i> [R3], he showed that Wordsworth should be understood as a major war poet and traced his complex development from an anti-war writer of the 1790s who wrote about conflict's victims into a pro-war poet who felt it was his duty to do all in his power to support Britain's combat with Napoleon. Between 2013 and 2015, Bainbridge worked</p>		

with the Trust's curatorial team to present the insights of his research in an exhibition *Wordsworth, War and Waterloo*, with drew on major loans from the Tate and the National Portrait Gallery. Together Bainbridge and the curatorial team edited the accompanying collection of essays by leading scholars in the area, for which Bainbridge wrote the opening essay [R4].

iii) The importance of place: Bushell's and Bainbridge's research brought new insights into the study of place in relation to Wordsworth's writing and its continuing influence on our understanding of the world in which we live. In her analysis of 'Michael' [R5], Bushell developed her examination of Wordsworth's compositional practice in relation to place and space, showing how place as theme and location for writing is central to Wordsworth's poetry and emphasising that his work is more fully appreciated through an engagement with the specifics of place. In his decade-long research on the Romantic-period invention of mountaineering and rock-climbing, which culminated in the monograph *Mountaineering and British Romanticism* [R6], Bainbridge has shown how Wordsworth's mobile and hands-on approach to place was a major element of his writing that has shaped how people have engaged with locations, especially the Lake District, for over two centuries.

3. References to the research

[R1] Sally Bushell, *Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson and Dickinson* (Charlottesville: Virginia University Press, 2009), 302 pp. Held at HEI. *Major peer-reviewed monograph published by leading publisher in field and highly positive post-publication reviews in leading journals.*

[R2] Sally Bushell, *From Goslar to Grasmere* (<http://collections.wordsworth.org.uk/GtoG/home.asp?page=FrontPage>) website launched January 2008. *Research quality indicated by AHRC funding as part of a competitive programme and acceptance into NINES (Networked Infrastructure for Nineteenth-century Electronic Scholarship).*

[R3] Simon Bainbridge, 'War' in *William Wordsworth in Context*, ed. Andrew Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 16 pp. Held at HEI. *Published by major university press in volume including leading Wordsworth scholars.*

[R4] Simon Bainbridge and Jeff Cowton (eds.), *Wordsworth, War and Waterloo* (Grasmere: Wordsworth Trust, 2018), 92 pp. Edited collection of essays. Held at HEI. *Includes major scholars in field.*

[R5] Sally Bushell, 'The Mapping of Meaning in Wordsworth's "Michael": Spatialised Speech Acts, Textual Place and Space', *Studies in Romanticism* 49.1 (Spring 2010): 43-78. DOI: [10.1353/srm.2010.0036](https://doi.org/10.1353/srm.2010.0036). *Peer-review journal published by university press.*

[R6] Simon Bainbridge, *Mountaineering and British Romanticism: The Literary Cultures of Climbing, 1770-1836* (Oxford University Press, 2020). 125,000 word monograph. Held at HEI. *Published after rigorous peer review by prestigious university press.*

Peer-reviewed research grants:

[G1] Bushell (PI), 'From Goslar to Grasmere: Moving Through and Dwelling in Wordsworth's Manuscript Spaces', AHRC: (2007) GBP51,272

4. Details of the impact

William Wordsworth remains one of Britain's most famous poets, though popular perceptions of his works are often limited to a small number of over-familiar texts. Bainbridge's and Bushell's research has enhanced understandings and appreciations of Wordsworth by engaging a range of individuals and groups with new insights into the poet's processes of writing, his lived experience of place, and his responses to the international crisis of war. Many of the research impacts were co-produced through a sustained and close collaboration with the Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere (the charity that oversees Wordsworth Grasmere and includes the poet's house, Dove Cottage, the Wordsworth Museum, and the Jerwood Centre archives). The impacts described below are ordered broadly chronologically from the earliest date within the assessment period.

Developing the public understanding and appreciation of Wordsworth's poetry: online course

The online course 'William Wordsworth: Poetry, People, and Place' was designed by Bainbridge and Bushell to convey their research insights to the wider public, drawing collaboratively on the collections and curatorial expertise of the Wordsworth Trust. On the course, participants engaged with Wordsworth's manuscripts and came to appreciate the importance of place in his writing practice and poetry [R1, R2, R5, R6]. Since its launch in September 2015, 23,741 people in 93 countries have participated in the freely available course, which ran annually between 2015 and 2020. In this period, participants made 71,232 comments on the material, offering their own responses to the research insights. The course earned a 95.10% 'Positive Feedback' rating and has a 4.9 star rating (out of 5, from 125 reviews) on FutureLearn (the platform through which it is available) [S1]. Individual films from the course have been viewed 90,248 times on YouTube.

The significance of the new and enhanced understandings of Wordsworth's poetry gained by participants was captured by one learner's response to the many positive comments made during the course: 'It is heart-warming to read how many people, like me, have been uplifted by it, spurred on to more study, given confidence and sheer pleasure in handling the material' [S1]. As this suggests, almost all learners gained a greater understanding of Wordsworth's writing and of poetry more generally: 98% of participants surveyed by FutureLearn answered 'Yes' to the question 'Did you gain new knowledge or skills by taking the course?' As one learner commented: 'I've come through this course having discovered so many new things and have gained confidence in engaging with poetry. I can't recommend this course enough. Just brilliant!' [S1]. Many learners discovered an ongoing pleasure in the writing of Wordsworth and of others, as is illustrated by another enthusiastic comment: 'I learned a great deal from this course and the obvious passion of the leaders for their subject was inspiring. I have bought books they recommended, I have signed up for events at Wordsworth Grasmere and I am visiting Dove Cottage in December. I will be absorbed in Wordsworth for some time to come' [S1]. In an unsolicited piece of correspondence, one learner outlined the transformative effect of taking the course, remarking that 'It hasn't just been a four week course to me but has opened a door to something incredible'. Commenting that 'I didn't have any particular interest in Wordsworth', she added 'I became totally hooked and I'm now a volunteer at Dove Cottage. It is impossible to convey to you what pleasure this gives me and working with a team sharing a common passion is an absolute joy' [S2].

Enhancing and transforming the public understanding and appreciation of Wordsworth's poetry: exhibitions

Bainbridge's and Bushell's research enhanced the public understanding of Wordsworth through its contribution to 4 exhibitions held at the Wordsworth Museum, Grasmere, visited by more than 120,000 people [S10]. The exhibitions *Seven Ways Up* (2016) on historical ascents of Snowdon, *Frankenstein* (2016) and *This Girl Did: Dorothy Wordsworth and Women Mountaineers* (2018), all drew on elements of Bainbridge's research on mountaineering and its culture and Bushell's work on place, informing exhibit selection and interpretation [R5, R6]. The exhibition *Wordsworth, War and Waterloo* transformed public understandings of Wordsworth by presenting him as a war poet [R3, R4]. It was curated by Bainbridge and the Wordsworth Trust's Curator and mounted between 16 March and 1 November 2015. It attracted 40,000 visitors and reached in excess of 50 million people through media coverage in high-profile outlets such as *The New York Review of Books* (5 June 2015). *The Times* ran a half-page article entitled 'How Wordsworth was a War Poet' (23 March 2015) while *World Service News* conducted an interview with Bainbridge and a panel discussion on the exhibition that was broadcast to approximately 41.5 million people (29 March 2015) [S3]. Visitors described the exhibition as an 'absolute revelation' and 'An eye-opener on Wordsworth's attitude to the war' and commented: 'I have never been so moved by an exhibition. It will certainly make a lasting impression on all who go there' [S3, S4]. The Wordsworth Trust published a volume to accompany the exhibition, edited by Bainbridge and Cowton [R4], which was 'Runner Up' in the Lake District Books of the Year Arts and Culture Award. The new understanding of Wordsworth gained further reach through a series of activities, including a 9-month programme of events at the Wordsworth Trust; public lectures by Bainbridge in Grasmere, London and York; and a

schools' project that resulted in 91 KS2 and KS3 children receiving their 'Arts Award Discover' awards in 2015, rewarding each of them for engaging with the research for 20 hours or more [S8]. The exhibition was nominated for a 'Family Friendly Museums' award by a member of the public and 468 children took up a summer holiday trail based on the exhibition. Year 7 pupils at John Ruskin School, Coniston were inspired to mount their own exhibition on the theme of 'Heroes and Villains' at the Wordsworth Museum.

Heightening the public understanding and appreciation of Wordsworth's poetry: media and broadcasts

Bainbridge's and Bushell's research heightened the public understanding and appreciation of Wordsworth through many high-profile and prestigious media discussions and public events, including several BBC television and radio programmes, with total audiences in excess of 65 million people [S5]. Highlights included appearances on BBC 1's prime-time *The One Show* (twice in 2016), *The Hairy Bikers* (2016), Melvyn Bragg's BBC Radio 4 series *The Matter of the North* (2017) and Radio 4's *The Verb* (2018). Many of these shows were regularly repeated and some are permanently available via BBC iPlayer. Bainbridge's discussion of Wordsworth's rock climbing was chosen as the closing piece of Radio 4's *Pick of the Week* (5 April 2020) in anticipation of the celebrations of the poet's 250th anniversary [S5].

Creating frameworks for reflection and vision: Wordsworth Walks

The research insights into Wordsworth's processes of outdoor writing within the specific landscapes of the Lake District achieved impact through a series of interactive Wordsworth Walks. One strand of these walks was designed primarily by Bainbridge for leaders and managers, using outdoor experiences and readings in Wordsworthian locations as a framework for participants' reflections on their own 'spots of time' and their future visions. More than 1,200 MBA students at Cumbria University participated between 2013 and 2020, 'some of them rating it as life changing!!', according to the course leader [S6]. Other walks that enacted the research for the public, enabling them to follow in Wordsworth's footsteps, included an ascent of Skiddaw (2018; 14 participants) and 'Walking Home' (2019; 50 participants, covered by *Border News*). Led by Bainbridge and Bushell, these walks were free events run in conjunction with the Wordsworth Trust, with participants responding to onsite readings.

Boosting the Lake District's cultural offering and stimulating tourism

The research insights into the importance of Wordsworth's physical manuscripts (held in Grasmere) and the actual Lake District locations in his poetry have enhanced the cultural offerings of the Wordsworth Trust and Cumbria, contributing to the quality of the tourist experience at Dove Cottage and in the Lake District more generally (a sector worth GBP2.9 billion to the region's economy in 2017). Research-informed events, often hosted by the Trust, have proved an attraction to the area. As noted above, 40,000 people visited *Wordsworth, War and Waterloo*, which also received many positive *TripAdvisor* recommendations as well as high-profile listings encouraging tourism to the area, including 'Critics' Choice' in *The Times* and '10 Reasons to Travel in March' in *The Daily Telegraph* [S3]. The Wordsworth Trust registered a boost to visitor numbers to Dove Cottage as a result of the online course, with many participations expressing a determination to visit ('a visit to Dove Cottage will be a must') [S5, S7]. Bainbridge has given 4 research-based talks on Romantic-period mountaineering for the Wordsworth Trust and the Kendal Mountain Festival (total audiences 220) [S5].

Enhancing cultural heritage interpretation and preservation

Bushell's and Bainbridge's research has significantly contributed to the preservation and interpretation of Wordsworth heritage through collaboration with the Wordsworth Trust. The Trust's Director comments, 'Lancaster University's research on Wordsworth has helped the Wordsworth Trust to offer an increased quality of visitor experience by giving us access to informed and up-to-date research on the poet' [S7]. The Trust's Curator describes Lancaster University's research as 'central to elements of our work in recent years', benefiting 'the people for whom I interpret our themes and collections through exhibitions, workshops and community outreach' [S8]. As the Curator testifies, Bushell's research [R1, R2] underpinned all the manuscript-based outreach sessions that the Trust led between 2015 and 2020 with special-

interest groups and groups with protected characteristics, including people with dementia, carers' groups, prisoners, refugees associated with the Children's Society, a group of poets with disabilities based in the lower socio-economic area of west coast Cumbria, and hospice nurses. Since 2015, the Trust has run 392 such events, with feedback from group leaders stressing the value of working with manuscripts and how this has supported individuals' poetic creativity [S8].

As well as providing 'the R&D from which [the Trust's curatorial team] take our inspiration' [S8], between 2016 and 2020 Bushell and Bainbridge acted as expert consultants for the Wordsworth Trust's 'Reimagining Wordsworth' project, a significant redesigning of a major tourist destination and heritage site. This GBP6.2 million Heritage Lottery Funded project redeveloped the Grasmere site, with Dove Cottage reopening in August 2020 (full Museum site opening delayed until 2021 due to coronavirus). Between December 2018 and December 2019, Bainbridge, who is a Trustee of the Wordsworth Trust, spent 89 hours of one-to-one consultation with the Curator, advising on the overall framework for the new permanent exhibition, identifying key quotations for use across the site (from the quotations on stone floorings and coffee cups to the digital 'Word Wall' that greets visitors), developing new displays (e.g. 3D models of Wordsworth's key mountains, *Prelude* manuscript gallery), and co-writing all the textual elements for the new museum (from large panels to object labels).

Stimulating the recognition of Wordsworth's ongoing relevance today

Due to Lancaster University's research, many people have recognised the continuing relevance of Wordsworth's poetry today. The research featured prominently in many of 2020's global celebrations of the 250th anniversary of the poet's birth. Bainbridge's and Bushell's research was the exclusive focus of a 45-minute AHRC/BBC R3 'New Thinkers' programme made to mark the anniversary, also available via the BBC Sounds app [S5]. Bainbridge's research [R6] featured in a number of published pieces marking the anniversary, including the cover story 'Wordsworth's Lake District: Follow in the footsteps of Britain's greatest nature poet' in *BBC Countryfile Magazine* (45,300 print circulation; 264,000 print readership) and articles in the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mail Online* (combined reach in excess of 3 million), *Country Walking* (circulation 33,000), and *Cumbria Life* (reach 15,000) [S5]. *Mountaineering and British Romanticism* [R6] was the subject of an hour-long discussion on Radio Cumbria in May 2020, a feature in *Cumbria Life* and a main slot at the 2020 online Kendal Mountain Literature Festival [S5]. Bainbridge's research-based knowledge of the poet informed his role as a member of the 'Wordsworth 250' Steering Group, the national alliance of organisations that co-ordinated the celebration of the anniversary [S8].

Overall, Lancaster University has pursued a strategy of bringing a research-led understanding of Wordsworth's poetry to a wide range of beneficiaries. One indication of the success of this strategy is the award to Lancaster University of the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism's Pedagogy Prize in 2015 for a submission entitled 'Wordsworth Online and On Location: Teaching Romantic Writing Beyond the Literature Classroom'. The prize was awarded as recognition of the use of innovative methods to engage a range of people from outside the usual disciplinary environment of literature departments with Wordsworth's poetry.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[S1] Report on FutureLearn survey of learners participating in 'William Wordsworth: Poetry, People and Place' online course, supporting data, and FutureLearn's own report (2015 to 2020).

[S2] Letter from participant in 'William Wordsworth: Poetry, People and Place' (2018).

[S3] Details of media reports and coverage of 'Wordsworth, War and Waterloo' exhibition (2015).

[S4] Visitors' Book and correspondence for 'Wordsworth, War and Waterloo' exhibition (2015).

[S5] List of media appearances, broadcasts and public engagement events (2015 to 2020).

[S6] Testimonial and email on 'Wordsworth Walks' from Residential Module lead, MBA /RKC programmes, University of Cumbria Business School (2021).

[S7] Testimonial from Director of the Wordsworth Trust (2021).

[S8] Testimonial from Curator and Head of Learning at the Wordsworth Trust (2021).