

Institution: University of South Wales		
Unit of Assessment: 28 History		
Title of case study: Using Research on Medieval Pilgrimage to Boost Faith Tourism in Wales		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2005-2015		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Prof. Maddy Gray	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor of History	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 1998-2017
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2013 to 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Gray's research on religious practice in medieval Wales has directly informed the Welsh Government's policy on tourism, which assigns an important place to faith tourism. Gray's work has highlighted the potential of pilgrimage routes to attract visitors to Wales and to generate sustainable economic benefits in disadvantaged areas. Specifically, Gray has been the driving force behind the Cistercian Way, a long-distance footpath linking monastic sites in Wales, inaugurated in 2016. Designed in conjunction with stakeholders such as The Ramblers, and with sponsorship from Visit Wales, the Cistercian Way dovetails with the Welsh Government's Faith Tourism Action Plan (2013), which was underpinned by work undertaken by Gray and John Winton, director of the National Churches Trust in Wales.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>This case study is based upon research by Professor Maddy Gray on three interlinked themes: (i) medieval pilgrimage routes, (ii) shrines and other places of veneration, and (iii) the Cistercian Order. Gray's work also addresses the place of pilgrimage and other forms of faith-based travel in contemporary society.</p> <p>Gray's specific contributions include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The key role of the Cistercians in the development of the Welsh landscape. Fifteen Cistercian monastic houses were established in medieval Wales, the first of them in the 1130s. They were to have profound spiritual, political, and material effects. The Cistercians enjoyed the patronage of the Welsh princes, who bestowed lands on the order and sponsored the building of churches and monasteries. The Cistercians, for their part, were strongly supportive of Welsh independence. The Order was also a force for economic change, introducing new agricultural practices and improving internal communications within Wales. These aspects of Cistercian life were explored in a special issue of <i>Archaeologia Cambrensis</i> co-edited by Gray in (R1). The distinctive nature of shrines and pilgrimage in Wales, all within the context of a broader Atlantic Christianity. Research by Gray has highlighted the contribution of 'holy places', such as sacred wells or the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Margam (R4), to a Welsh sense of identity, by describing the connections between relics and place in Medieval Wales (R5). The consumption needs of pilgrims and the development of group identities (expressed through specific forms of clothing or adornment). Gray has studied the material culture of pilgrimage in medieval and early modern Wales and reflected upon how the provisioning of modern faith tourists, through locally provided catering 		

- and accommodation, could contribute to the regeneration of local economies (R3 and R5).
- iv. **The hostility that pilgrims can sometimes generate in present-day host communities and the potential for economic regeneration that pilgrimage can bring.** In 2009 Gray and Winton outlined the key issues, drawing on interviews with key stakeholders invested in the Penrhys shrine in the Rhondda valley, South Wales (R2). These included local government agencies, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff, Penrhys villagers, and members of the laity in the Catholic parish of Ferndale. Among the problems identified by Gray and Winton were a lack of historical awareness on the part of the host community, the lack of any mechanism for connecting visitors to the local community, the absence of any framework for religious tourism within Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, the ethical problem of generating commercial gains in ways that respects the sacred context, and the challenge of retaining those gains within the local community. Gray and Winton made specific recommendations for overcoming these difficulties. These included: clarifying the aims of any regeneration scheme; encouraging regular communication between different stakeholders; widening the circle of stakeholder groups; and fostering entrepreneurial responses to religious tourism that were sustainable.

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

All outputs are by Gray, solely or with collaborators

(R1) [with Webster] eds, *Cistercians in Wales and the West (Archaeologia Cambrensis*, special no. 154, 2005)

(R2) [with Winton] 'The effect of religious tourism on host communities', in Anna Trono (ed.), *Tourism, Religion and Culture: Regional Development through Meaningful Tourism Experiences* (Lecce: Congedo Editore, 2009), pp. 551-562

(R3) 'Sacred space and the natural world: the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Penrhys', *European Review of History: Revue europeene d'histoire*, 18: 2 (2011), 243-260

(R4) 'The Well and Shrine of the Virgin Mary at Margam', *Morgannwg*, 56 (2012), 5-17

(R5) 'Contested Relics: Winefride and the Saints of the Atlantic churches' in James Robinson and Lloyd de Beer with Anna Harden (eds), *Matter of Faith: An Interdisciplinary Study of Relics and Relic Veneration in the Medieval Period* (London: British Museum, 2014), pp.164-69

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

Gray's research has generated new ways of thinking about pilgrimage as an aspect of heritage tourism and about the value of faith-based tourism in economic and social regeneration. This is a matter of growing moment. As the secretary-general of the UN World Tourism Organisation acknowledged in 2015, 'religious tourism can be one of the most effective tools to foster inclusive and sustainable development' ([International Conference on Religious Tourism: Fostering sustainable socio-economic development for host communities](#), p. 6]. Gray has fostered such development within a Welsh context. Her work has led to faith tourism being 'recognised as an integral component of the visitor experience in Wales, adding significant value to the destination offer, contributing to the well-being of the visitor and host community, and enhancing local, regional and national "Sense of Place"' ([Faith Tourism Action Plan](#), p. 2).

The impact of Gray's research has been manifested in various ways:

- I. **Informing the Welsh Government's 2013 Faith Tourism Action Plan.** With funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales' Strategic Impact Programme in 2009, Gray was able to work with John Winton of the National Churches Trust in Wales, the charity dedicated to 'supporting places of worship of historic, architectural and community value'. Together, they explored policy options for faith tourism in Wales. As John Winton recalls, their work led the Welsh Government, at the prompting of Visit Wales, to commission an action plan. The plan was drafted 'very much in consultation with Maddy Gray and informed by her research' (S1). Winton continues: 'The Action Plan was completed in 2013 and was widely welcomed. The then Minister for Business, Enterprise, Technology & Science in the Welsh Government, Edwina Hart, was particularly enthusiastic.' As a result, faith tourism is now an integral part of tourism promotion by Visit Wales, with a dedicated [Faith Tourism website](#) hosted by Visit Wales.
- II. **The establishment of the Cistercian Way (CW),** a round-Wales route linking Cistercian abbeys and other heritage sites. Following the special edition of *Archaeologia Cambrensis* in 2005 (R1), there was revived interest in a walk originally plotted by Gray in 1998. Further Strategic Impact Programme funding awarded to Gray and Winton in 2014 facilitated liaison with local communities along the projected route and consultation with Welsh political figures, notably Peter Black, the then Liberal Democrat spokesperson for heritage, and Edwina Hart AM during her 2011-2016 tenure of the Business, Enterprise, Technology & Science portfolio in the Welsh Government. After briefings by Gray to Welsh Assembly Members and ministers, the CW was awarded start-up funding via Visit Wales, which enabled web design, mapping and waymarking. Initially, south-east Wales sections of the CW were prioritised as a flag-ship project for the 2015 Valleys Festival of Walking. The CW was launched at the 2016 National Eisteddfod – a major cultural event in Wales, which attracted [140,297](#) visitors in 2016. The CW has subsequently become a well-known walking route, embraced by [The Ramblers](#) (123,000 UK members) and the [Long-Distance Walkers Association](#) (8,800 members), and featuring on walking tourism websites such as [www.open-walks.co.uk](#), where a dedicated Cistercian Way page has received 2,674 visits (as of 13 January 2021). The CW has also been adopted by recreational businesses such as [Journeying](#), which provides mindful walking tours across the UK. The net effect has been considerable. When asked about the measurable effects of Cistercian heritage tourism in the National Assembly in January 2017, the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport replied that Cistercian sites managed by the government agency Cadw had seen 'a considerable increase in visitor numbers' (S2). He continued: 'And, in terms of the associated spend, we've again seen an increase. We've seen, for example, with Cadw properties at Tintern and Valle Crucis and Strata Florida, between them, they've attracted more than 84,000 visitors.'
- III. **Gray's appointment to Church in Wales diocesan steering groups on pilgrimage for the dioceses of Llandaff and Monmouth.** Gray was invited to join the steering committee for the Llandaff Diocesan Year of Pilgrimage 2020 following a clergy training day which she delivered in preparation for a Pilgrimage Summer School in Santiago de Compostela (S3). Bishop June Osborne believes Gray's introduction to pilgrimage 'contributed significantly to the success of the summer school' (S4).
- IV. **Consultative roles for Gray with several regional projects,** including the [St Thomas Way](#), a pilgrimage route between Swansea and Hereford, revived with AHRC funding in 2017 (S5), and the [North Wales Pilgrim's Way](#). Gray has also been involved in several more local initiatives. To take one example, Gray's research on pilgrimage to the Holy Rood of Llangynwyd led to the development of the Laleston Stones Trail, a route laid out by the Laleston Community Council following the medieval pilgrimage route known as the Ffordd y Gyfraith. In another example, Gray has been regularly consulted by the [Penrhys Pilgrimage Working Group](#), whose members have developed and waymarked a section of Cistercian pilgrimage trail from Llandaff to Penrhys. This links directly to the research carried out by Gray and

Winton (**R3**) which considered the impact of the Marian shrine at Penrhys on the local community. These local routes have contributed to the health and well-being of local communities during the Covid-19 crisis. Lady Helen Lloyd-Jones, convenor of the Penrhys Pilgrimage Working Group, has witnessed 'a tremendous number of walkers used [the route] for exercise during Lockdown' and 'This is bringing economic value to the community' (**S6**).

- V. **The formation of the Faith Tourism Forum for Wales**, an initiative spearheaded by Gray and Christopher Catling, secretary to the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. Catling explains: 'For some time, I have been encouraging Visit Wales to build on their Faith Tourism Action Plan... Having come across Maddy's research on the Cistercians and pilgrimage, as well as the Cistercian Way and other heritage projects that Maddy had some involvement in (for instance, St Thomas' Way), I approached Maddy to ask for her help in organising a Spiritual Tourism symposium' (**S7**). Key constituencies committed to the initiative. The 120 delegates to the over-subscribed launch, scheduled for April 2020, would have included members of the Welsh Assembly, representatives of local authorities and public bodies (Natural Resources Wales, Cadw, and Visit Wales), and delegates from walking groups and faith communities. The launch fell victim to the Covid-19 crisis. Nevertheless, the delegates are connected digitally via a blog (faithtourismwales.wordpress.com) and the scheme will be revived when public health allows.

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

- S1.** John Winton, director of the National Churches Trust in Wales
- S2.** Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport, Welsh Parliament plenary session, 25 January 2017, para. 55 (<https://record.senedd.wales/Plenary/4078#C22351>)
- S3.** The Reverend Mark Prevett, chair, Llandaff Diocesan Year of Pilgrimage 2020 Steering Committee
- S4.** Bishop June Osborne of Llandaff, Church in Wales
- S5.** Professor Catherine Clarke, AHRC Principal Investigator, The St Thomas Way
- S6.** Lady Helen Lloyd-Jones, Convenor, Penrhys Pilgrimage Working Group
- S7.** Christopher Catling, Secretary to the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales