

Institution: University of Exeter		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 27 English Language and Literature		
Title of case study: Enhancing regional heritage provision and transforming the preservation, exhibition and public understanding of Thomas Hardy's life and work		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2002–ongoing		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Angelique Richardson	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Professor	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: September 1998 - ongoing
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013–ongoing		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Professor Richardson's research has generated new perspectives on Thomas Hardy's life and work that have enhanced regional heritage provision, generated cultural tourism and improved understandings for audiences in the heritage sector and beyond. She has reshaped the preservation, exhibition and accessibility of Hardy's work through longstanding collaboration with Dorset County Museum (DCM), which holds the world's most significant Hardy archival collection, and two nearby National Trust properties, Hardy's Cottage, and Max Gate, the Dorchester house that he designed and lived in. Richardson contributed to DCM's successful £11.3m HLF bid for a major transformation and expansion (2018–2020). She led on digitising and making accessible an under-utilised part of the Hardy Collection, producing a step change in the museum's digital offering, and co-created new and expanded permanent exhibitions. For all three sites, Richardson also improved professional practice in interpretation and outreach, and enhanced their Hardy educational activities and visitor experience. Finally, her heritage collaboration has also provided the springboard for enabling new public understandings and creating new educational resources for schools.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Richardson's work on Hardy is distinct in combining archival and biographical research with the history of science, generating new understandings of Hardy's social and political views and literary networks. His campaigning work on animal protection, for example, is one of the aspects Richardson has illuminated. In publications over two decades, her research [3.2, 3.5, 3.6] has shed light on Hardy's understanding of the fundamental importance of the environment through his engagement with the work of Charles Darwin, and other 19th-century scientists on whose work he drew. Wellcome Trust funding enabled Richardson to extend her work on 19th-century science, including ideas on ecological interdependence, to show its contemporary relevance, demonstrating how contemporary epigenetics resonates with debates over Victorian environmental explanations of poverty [3.4].</p> <p>Richardson's research has led to collaboration with the primary heritage bodies concerned with promoting Hardy's life and work. From 2012-15, she directed a Great Western Research-funded collaborative doctoral award (CDA, Jonathan Memel) with the National Trust, 'Thomas Hardy and Education', which informed learning activities at Hardy's Cottage. Since 2015, Richardson has centred her research on the c.5,000 letters to Hardy that DCM holds as part of its centrepiece Hardy Collection, which before had received little critical attention due to their lack of transcription. The UK National Commission for UNESCO recognised the significance of this archive by selecting it for its Memory of the World Programme in 2013.</p> <p>Hardy had thousands of correspondents worldwide. These included writers such as J.M. Barrie, Amy Levy, Ezra Pound, Siegfried Sassoon, H.G. Wells and Virginia Woolf. Richardson's research on the correspondence offers new insights into perceptions of his work and his place</p>		

within various political and intellectual communities, and on the practice of letter writing [3.3]. It reveals his sense of solidarity with women, his inspirational role for younger writers including Sassoon, and his ideas about suffrage, peace, war, and international relations.

Richardson's research on these letters formed the core of 'Hardy's Correspondents', a collaborative digital humanities project with the DCM begun in 2015 [3.1]. Phase One, released in 2019, made freely available digital images and fully annotated transcriptions of 100 previously unpublished letters to Hardy. Additional features drew on innovations in digital scholarly editing to provide links to Hardy's works whenever they were mentioned, and an interactive map was populated with geotags of the locations of all correspondents. Richardson oversaw and contributed to the selection, transcriptions and headnotes of Hardy's Correspondents with support from Dr Helen Angear, former AHRC CDA with DCM (2015-19). Richardson's research collaboration with DCM is ongoing, and since 2018 she has directed two more CDAs awarded by the AHRC South, West & Wales DTP. Both of these reinterpret Hardy by drawing on the holdings of DCM and Dorset History Centre.

Complementing Hardy's Correspondents, Richardson's impact built on her research into the contemporary relevance and circulation of Hardy's work, which has demonstrated the way it has found new international audiences over the past 150 years. She guest-edited a special issue of *Literature Compass* in 2016 on 'Hardy: Diverse Audiences', in which her lead article on 'Global Hardy' illuminated the multiplicity of Hardy's work and international appeal by framing articles from eight international scholars that mapped his reception, circulation, and translation in China, Japan, India, Russia, and Brazil [3.3].

3. References to the research

- 3.1 Angelique Richardson and Helen Angear, editors. *Hardy's Correspondents*, Phase One, University of Exeter, <http://hardycorrespondents.exeter.ac.uk/index.html> (2019).
- 3.2 'Hardy and Biology', in Phillip Mallett (ed.), *Thomas Hardy: Texts and Contexts* (Palgrave, 2002), pp. 156-179.
- 3.3 *Hardy: Diverse Audiences*, Special Issue, *Literature Compass* (2016), Editor and Contributor of 'A Global Hardy', lead article, pp. 123-135
<https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12301>; full issue pp.121-223.
- 3.4 'Darwin and Reductionisms: Victorian, Neo-Darwinian and Postgenomic Biologies', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 2010 (11).
<https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.583>.
- 3.5 'Hardy and the Place of Culture', in Keith Wilson, ed., *Blackwell Companion to Thomas Hardy* (Blackwell, 2009; paperback, 2012), pp. 54-70.
- 3.6 'Hardy and Science: A Chapter of Accidents', in Phillip Mallett (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Thomas Hardy Studies* (Palgrave, 2004) pp. 156-180; translated in N. Zhenzhao and M. Xian (eds), *Translated Essays on the Study of Thomas Hardy* (Yilin Press, 2014).

Outputs 3.2.3.5, 3.6, can be supplied on request.

Related grants: 2013 Wellcome Trust Research Leave Award – £31,475.

4. Details of the impact

Richardson's research has significantly enhanced Dorset's heritage provision and encouraged cultural tourism at Max Gate, Hardy's Cottage and Dorset County Museum (DCM), the largest museum in the county, by improving the museum's exhibition, accessibility, outreach, professional practice and visitor experience. Her expertise and heritage collaborations further led to increasing the public understanding and educational uses of Hardy via engagement with different media and production of school resources.

Transforming the preservation, exhibition and accessibility of Hardy's life and work at DCM

DCM director Dr Jon Murden attests that Richardson has played a 'major role' in the museum's heritage provision, 'from selection and range of objects to interpretation, workstations and digital provision, allowing a deeper, richer and more accurate understanding of, and engagement with, regional literary heritage' [5.1]. Collaborating with DCM since 2009, Richardson has enabled DCM to fulfil its strategic aim of reaching larger and broader audiences by offering new perspectives and understandings of its Hardy Collection.

Richardson provided formal support to its successful £11.3 million HLF bid to transform, enlarge and open up the museum to new audiences, helping to regenerate Dorset's overall heritage offering. She advised on its new Collections Discovery Centre, which offers improved physical and digital access to collections, including its centrepiece Thomas Hardy Collection. [5.1]. Aided by Richardson's contributions, Murden anticipates that 'the museum's visitors will increase from 45,000 to over 85,000 per annum, and its website visitors from 180,000 to over one million per annum' [5.1]. Murden further notes that DCM's three CDA studentships in partnership with Richardson and the University of Exeter 'represent the best part of [a] quarter of a million pounds' worth of investment in our collections, which has been vitally important [...] as match funding to [...] leverage other investment into the museum' [5.1].

DCM closed for its HLF-funded expansion in October 2018 (due to COVID the reopening has been delayed from June 2020 to 2021). During renovation, Richardson's research has significantly informed the content of the expanded and revamped permanent displays of Hardy's Dorset Galleries, leading to better presentation of his life and work across five new exhibition rooms [5.1]. Richardson achieved this by advising on themes and new display material (including 133 display objects), and editing all display text:

'Richardson has considerably improved our knowledge of the Hardy collections ... This led directly to better presentation', Elizabeth Selby, Director of Collections and Public Engagement, DCM [5.1].

The new galleries now include consideration of Hardy's exploration of controversial subjects, from class inequality to animal welfare and gender oppression. Richardson also advised on the interpretation and selection of 119 display objects for DCM's new regional literary heritage gallery, Artists' Dorset, and edited all text for this exhibition.

Richardson is playing a pivotal role in expanding the use of digital technology to improve both preservation and accessibility of the Hardy Collection. DCM has increased access to previously neglected material by making *Hardy's Correspondents* freely available online via a University of Exeter-hosted site, and via interactive workstations at the new Discovery Centre when the museum reopens. Hardy's manuscripts and Wessex maps will also be viewable on touchscreens, utilising material developed with Richardson and CDA students Helen Angear and Sophie Welsh. This digital transformation has already 'led to new interest in the archive through the *Hardy's Correspondents* site receiving over 1,200 visits to the 100 online letters' [5.1; 5.2]. The publicity received by *Hardy's Correspondents* directly led to a donation to DCM of a number of newly discovered letters from Florence Dugdale, Hardy's second wife [5.3].

Improving Dorset museums' professional practice, educational outreach, and visitor numbers and experience

Richardson's development of new learning offers at DCM has enhanced curatorial interpretation and outreach skills, contributing to 'the professional development of the team, and enabling us to provide, for the first time, long-term Hardy-related learning offers for secondary and A-level educational groups', according to Murden [5.1]. The learning offers relate to national curriculum Key Stages (KS) 3 on Victorian letter-writing and 4 on non-fiction and archive material, and a university taster session on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* [5.4].

Richardson has likewise improved the visitor experience at both Max Gate and Hardy's Cottage by developing curatorial and volunteer expertise and exhibition displays and expanding their

educational offerings. Richardson's impact on the National Trust forms part of her work directing the educational strategy of the Hardy Country Steering Group, a partnership of local councils, heritage, tourism and educational organisations. She founded the Hardy County Learning Group in 2011, and is currently Chair [5.5]. Her leadership has provided ongoing and substantial research benefits to the NT:

'It has led to a number of changes to educational practices at the National Trust properties relating to Hardy, from the selection of material for display to their presentation and interpretation; it is therefore significantly enhancing the visitor experience and benefiting our public engagement and outreach work.' Martin Stephen, Visitor Experience Manager, National Trust, Hardy Country. [5.4]

At Hardy's Cottage, for example, Richardson led on introducing formal learning offers for the first time for English KS4 and KS5 (A level students); she also contributed to an exhibition at Max Gate on Emma Hardy in 2018. As the Visitor Experience Manager for the two NT properties testifies, Richardson is 'directing the training of our staff and volunteers in crucial new skills [...] and will ensure the continuation of the new educational practices we are adopting as a result of the collaboration' [5.4]. Richardson's contribution to a range of initiatives have helped visitor numbers at Max Gate increase by an annual average of 7.4% per year between 2014 and 2019, with a peak annual increase of 35.3% between February 29, 2016, and March 1, 2017, with total visitors for that year of 27,685 [5.4].

At Hardy's Cottage, Richardson helped to enable the NT and Dorset County Council-led 'Hardy Birthplace' project, whereby the HLF provided £495,000 to develop a new visitor centre (2014). Harriet Still, the Visitor Experience Officer at Hardy's Cottage, notes that Richardson's leadership of the Hardy County Learning Group 'helped strengthen the working relationships that enabled the building [of the centre]' [5.4]. The centre has increased visitor satisfaction by 'encouraging engagement between visitors and the landscape in which Thomas Hardy grew up and which influenced his writings' [5.4].

Richardson directed the design of a trail at Hardy's Cottage in 2015 and 2016, and contributed to developing the annual Apple Day, which attracts 'many repeat visits, as well as [...] new audiences of young families' [5.4]. She also helped to extend the breadth and depth of student engagement at Hardy's Cottage by directing the provision of new educational initiatives. The new learning offers include 'Fact into Fiction', developed with the NT/Great Western Research CDA in 2014, whereby KS4 and KS5 students investigate Hardy's reading of *Dorset County Chronicle*, held at DCM, as inspiration for *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. The CDA project also supported new KS2 and KS3 learning offers. In 2017, the Visitor Experience Officer further noted that this offer 'has been key' in relating the landscapes in Hardy's work to DCM's archive and 'provides us with a fantastic way of engaging students with primary sources and linking these to the act of writing' [5.4]. These initiatives helped to boost literary tourism following the 2015 *Far From the Madding Crowd* film adaptation, and have contributed to significant increases in Hardy's Cottage visitor numbers: by an annual average of 12.9% per year between 2014 (22,423) and 2019 (36,954), with a peak annual increase of 46.3% between February 28, 2014, and March 1, 2015 [5.4].

Enabling new public understandings and creating educational resources for schools

Since 2012, Richardson has organised an annual Hardy Country public lecture series at DCM on behalf of Hardy County Steering Group (HCSG), with over 40 lectures delivered, reaching more than 1,000 people. According to Murden, the feedback demonstrates that the 'lectures are leading to [...] new reading choices, new visits to local sites and new walks, as well as ways of enriching audiences' understanding of the past' [5.1].

In 2018, Richardson became HCSG co-chair, leading on raising Hardy's profile nationally and internationally. In addition to giving regular public lectures, recent activities achieving this impact include connecting Hardy's work to concerns about COVID-19, homelessness and eugenics, through four freely available online articles for the *London Review of Books* (July 31, August 20, September 7 and December 3, 2020), a feature piece in the *Guardian* that

discusses Hardy's humanitarianism (October 27, 2020; 669 comments), and an article that discusses his internationalism and humanitarianism (*Byline Times*, December 29, 2020). [5.6] The *LRB* has testified that the first two pieces were 'our two most-read blogposts in August, and were among our 15 most-read pieces across the site, blog and paper that month' [5.6]. Meanwhile, the story of the newly discovered letters was widely covered in the press, and Richardson wrote a feature essay on them in the *Times Literary Supplement* (April 3, 2020, audited readership 32,100) [5.3].

Richardson's work has also shaped two forthcoming documentaries on Hardy: one by Channel 5 and a second by Odyssey Television for Sky Arts. The first was initially due for broadcast for Christmas 2020, but has been postponed to due to COVID-19 to 2021; the second will also be broadcast in 2021. Odyssey Television has testified how Richardson directed the initial synopsis, noting: 'Your advice has been indispensable. Your selecting of materials has enlarged the programme's vision and your insights have been of great value.' [5.7]

Richardson's research led to the development of new digital resources for UK teachers. These include lesson plans providing innovative ways for students to engage with literary archives as part of recent changes to KS4 English Language. The 'Hardy and Heritage' website offers teaching plans for GCSE English and IB, co-developed with six South West schools and colleges. These increased student and teacher confidence in using archival sources [5.8; 5.9]. A Mullion School teacher who participated in the 2016 pilot testified: 'Teachers need time, guidance and access to original documents: all three are being provided by the University of Exeter.' Following the pilot, the school asserted that the work had 'allowed us to change our school's delivery of the new GCSE English Language assessment' [5.8]. Within two months of launching a free teaching pack via *Tes* in 2018, the *Tes* article promoting it had 2,412 unique page views [5.9; 5.10].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- 5.1 Impact on Dorset County Museum (testimonials by Jon Murden, Director [27/2/2017; 15/09/2020] and Elizabeth Selby, Director of Collections and Public Engagement [25/09/2020]; redevelopment plans; DCM public talks questionnaire feedback; Jon Murden interview on DCM website about collaboration with University of Exeter).
- 5.2 'Hardy's Correspondents' analytics covering period 1/10/2019-15/09/2020.
- 5.3 Media coverage of *Hardy's Correspondents* and newly discovered letters (*TLS* essay 3/04/2020; collection of media articles; Exeter press office report).
- 5.4 Impact on National Trust properties (testimonials by Visitor Experience Officer at Hardy's Cottage [19/3/2017] and Visitor Experience Manager at Max Gate [16/3/2017]; August 2020 Visitor Experience Manager update on visitor figures, 2014-2019).
- 5.5 Chair of Hardy Country Steering Group testimonial 14/03/2017.
- 5.6 Popular writing (screenshots of *London Review of Books* pieces and email on readership [28/9/2020]; *Guardian* piece, *Byline Times* piece).
- 5.7 Evidence of contribution to films (Odyssey Films-Pinewood Studios [for Sky Arts] testimonial 16/12/2020; producer [for Channel 5] email 16/12/2020).
- 5.8 GCSE resource pilot evaluation (student and teacher questionnaires; testimonials from A level English team leader at Exeter College [15/3/2017]; Director of Teaching, Learning and Performance, and Head of English, Languages, and IB at Exeter College [email 26/8/2016]; IB Co-ordinator and Programme Leader at Exeter College [15/3/2017]; teacher at Mullion School [13/3/2017]; Head of English at Poole Grammar School [17/3/2017]).
- 5.9 GCSE resource use interim evaluation report. April 2020. Produced by Helen Angear. Internal to University of Exeter.
- 5.10 *Tes* article 5/6/2018 and metrics supplied by *Tes* by email 10, 11 August 2020.