

DHeritage Student Research Projects

Heritage flourishes at local, national and international levels where it takes many forms. The contribution of heritage practice to community building, economic prosperity, cultural adaptation and a sense of belonging is widely recognised. It is a dimension of all spheres of human activity and lends itself to study across disciplinary boundaries.

The University of Hertfordshire's innovative [Professional Doctorate in Heritage](#) (DHeritage) programme is aimed at professionals who work in the heritage field broadly defined, whether in the private or the public sector. It interests those who are employed in planning, museums, archives, community history, archaeology, and social and cultural sustainability. It appeals to practitioners who want to reflect on and contribute to the latest thinking in this dynamic and ever-changing field.

Students follow the programme as part of a cohort, supported by research training and supervision shaped to their needs from across the disciplines including History, Education, and Creative Arts. The research our students produce is also innovative and promises to make a significant contribution to knowledge and practice in the heritage sector, broadly defined. What follows is a snapshot of some of our students' work.

Professor Dr Grace Lees-Maffei, Programme Director, DHeritage, g.lees-maffei@herts.ac.uk

Dr Barbara Wood

An Examination of Power Relationships and Forms of Authority in Heritage: the Connection with Knowledge and the Impacts of their Changing Meanings on Authenticity

Barbara Wood is a curator at The National Trust. Her doctorate examined the heritage industry and historic environments, particularly their association, on the one hand, with authenticity, integrity and sharing information and, on the other, with the manipulation of experience, restrictions on access and control of information. Barbara asked, who has the authority to communicate knowledge and the power to manage experience in the heritage sector? Ownership of material and information has changed over time, reflecting the requirements of funders, the expectations of visitors and the interests of individuals. Is it possible to engage directly with heritage or are experiences always managed and manipulated to reflect the interests of individuals or current sectoral objectives? What is the purpose and integrity of the dialogue between those who use historic resources and those who care for them? There will always accommodations to be made, it seems, whether users of such resources can ever find an authentic experience and, we might ask, whether this matters.

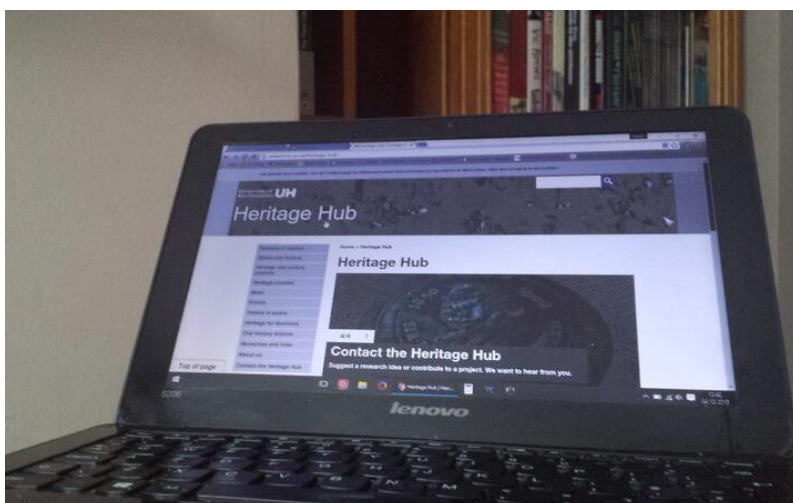


The communication of authority and authenticity in scenarios such as this one (above) interest Barbara Wood.

Helen Casey

Digital Decisions and Online Heritage: an Examination of the Response of the GLAM Sector to the Opportunities of the Internet Since 2000

Helen Casey is a filmmaker and Director at Magic Beans Media. Helen is researching the rise of information technology since the turn of the millennium and its effect on heritage professionals and the sectors in which they work. When the internet was new, it seemed like a new dawn for heritage professionals. It would allow records to be digitised, artefacts to be experienced through virtual reality, and expertise to be shared worldwide with ease. Technology would democratise our heritage, allowing more people to access, experience and learn from it. At the same time, there were warnings that the use of gaudy information screens in exhibitions would distract from the objects displayed, immersive technology allowing sensory perception would cheapen and simplify the visitor experience, and expensive technology used to digitise and share heritage would become obsolete within a few years, wasting valuable resources and creating a 'digital black hole' where digitised artefacts would go to die. Helen's research asks how many of these predictions came to pass, and what we can learn from the experience of heritage professionals since the turn of the millennium that could help them plan ahead in a world of rapid and unpredictable technological change.



Catherine Ayres

Building Utopia: Heritage, Identity and Authority in Milton Keynes

Catherine Ayres was Director of the National Museum of Ras Al Khaimah, UAE and is now based in Durham, UK. She is a member of the first cohort of DHeritage students. Kate's doctoral research examines the role that museums and heritage attractions play in shaping heritage identity within new towns.

Within the UK, heritage has apparent value and legitimacy through age. New Towns have often been lambasted in the press as being devoid of heritage and, as such, are fair game for ridicule with Milton Keynes a prime example of misrepresentation. Conversely within the UAE, although the past is respected and celebrated through numerous heritage festivals that focus on traditional dances and crafts, it is the more recent heritage which is valued, a heritage which spans some fifty years and coincides with the rapid changes brought about by the discovery of oil.

Perceptions of heritage identity and place shaping within these hitherto disparate places (the new town of Milton Keynes, United Kingdom, and the emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, United Arab Emirates) have, in fact, significant points of similarity. Examined through a series of case studies, the research will explore attitudes to heritage and identity; it will attempt to unpick assumptions made about these places and to offer up solutions for creating community identity through the media of museums within new town environments which are inhabited by a heterogeneous population comprised of immigrants and a local minority. In tandem the work will explore the ways that this heritage is displayed and endorsed: is the past manipulated as a tool for propaganda or displayed as fact?



Catherine (Director of Museums) with Ahmad Hilal (Director of Archaeology) dance at a pop-up heritage festival for the 45th Ras Al Khaimah National Day celebrations. Women and non-locals (Hilal is from Pakistan) are never usually involved. Locals and other members of the public wanted to take selfies of this unusual occurrence.

Janine Marriott

Public Engagement and attitudes to sites of memorial - Death and Remembrance - A Toolkit

Janine Marriott is the Public Engagement Manager at Arnos Vale Cemetery Trust. Her research explores the way UK historic 19th century cemeteries are increasingly becoming public engagement sites.

Although increasingly popular heritage destinations, cemetery sites are not always well researched or understood by the wider heritage field, as these sites are not traditional heritage venues like stately homes, museums, galleries, or archives. They do however comprise elements of these traditional heritage sites whilst also being sensitive and spiritual sites so heritage models can be partially applied to them and public engagement, like that found in traditional sites, is increasingly an important part of protecting and improving these landscapes.



Janine's research is a study of a range of 19th century historic cemetery sites to discover the different ways people engage with and experience such sites and how they interact with what can be challenging and provoking places hosting a range of audiences. There are now cemetery specific heritage communities there growing array of experience and knowledge but has no joint body of knowledge and little research on how public engagement is implemented in these deathscapes. This research will explore a number of case studies, and the research will produce resources and research that can be used to advise and support cemeteries when engaging the public and offers ways that cemetery sites can manage very different audiences and users plus offer public engagement ideas in order to open these sites to audiences in sustainable and respectful ways.



Sarah Buckingham

Sarah Buckingham is a planning officer and Course Director for the Historic Building Conservation programme at the Institute of Continuing Education, Cambridge University. She was previously Head of Heritage Protection Reform at English Heritage.

Heritage and Integrity: Crisis and Rehabilitation

The debate prompted by the destruction of major monuments and world heritage sites in Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East by the “Islamic State”, or as a by-product of conflict, has the potential to prompt a significant reconsideration of contemporary philosophical and practical approaches to heritage and its conservation, raising questions about the concept of “authenticity”, and how that influences how it is treated. How have authenticity in terms of retained fabric, and authenticity recognised by a wider set of values, been successfully negotiated in major rehabilitation projects following a natural or human-made crisis? How might the involvement of traditional trades and crafts in rehabilitation works affect concepts of authenticity and integrity?

My research will explore four lines of enquiry: (1) the choices of approach made by key project or programme managers, Governments or heritage agencies, including any conservation philosophical frameworks applied to the task; (2) the involvement and roles of those practicing traditional construction crafts and trades; (3) a survey of the physical effects including survival of fabric and degree of intervention, to assess - against a set of criteria drawn from conservation theory and practice - the degree of survival of “significance” in material terms; (4) an assessment of apparent cultural regenerative and social effects.

Case studies will examine how major rehabilitation of urban historic areas has been undertaken as part of an organised programme of works. These will be areas which have suffered major trauma from conflict, natural disaster, or severe economic decline, representing Britain, Western Europe and the Middle East. I will adopt an inductive approach in investigating the actions taken under these programmes and observing the outcomes, and using the multi-perspectival information gained to identify and refine principles for the conservation of heritage sites and produce guidance on the practice of doing so, specifically in the context of post-trauma rehabilitation. Interviews will be the primary method to test the compliance with, and effectiveness of, principles relating to authenticity set out in the relevant international treaties and charters and any local codes for the protection and management of heritage.



Adrienne Hamilton

Adrienne Hamilton is a DHeritage student based in San Diego, USA. She is our first distance learning student, and therefore has supervisors based at the University of Hertfordshire and at Northern Illinois University, USA. Her doctoral research extends her MSc research on the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, management and operations at World Heritage Sites, and the impacts of world heritage designation on local communities. She began to study these issues in 2015 just as Europe started to acknowledge the need to address the human costs associated with mass migrations occurring across the continent.

Heritage and Migration(s): The response of World Heritage Sites to the migrant and refugee experience in Europe

Leadership teams at internationally renowned heritage sites are well-positioned to make an impact on national policies regarding immigrants. There now exists an opportunity for these high-profile sites to actively enhance European perceptions and expectations of heritage and to help ease the immigrant experience by addressing broad issues of identity and belonging. This is particularly relevant when some European governments are fortifying their so-called homogenous societies and others are actively tearing down exclusionist policies. By harnessing and enfolding immigrant/migrant experiences into the traditional construct of heritage, WHS could play a key role in a cultural response to current migrations across much of Europe.

Adrienne's doctoral research examines the following research questions:

- How are European World Heritage Sites (WHS) responding to current human migration patterns?
- Have specific sites and museums emerged as forerunners in the heritage and cultural sectors' response to the current movements of people into and throughout Europe?
- Which organisations have the potential to contribute to the conversation about heritage and migration?

Information for new Trustees of Small Museums: Good Governance



*One of a series of leaflets designed to help
new Trustees understand their
responsibilities and role within the UK
Museum Sector*

SARAH FITZPATRICK

OCTOBER 2018

Sarah Fitzpatrick

Sarah Fitzpatrick works in Higher Education. The working title for her doctoral research is:

Tracking the changes in heritage discourse and strategic and management practice at small heritage sites.

Sarah is considering the use of museums in Buckinghamshire as a case study.

Heritage management is a relatively new and interdisciplinary subject, representing a range of roles, skills and issues which draw from a number of disciplines, including management and business studies. The links between theory and practice in heritage management studies warrant investigation.

Management schools use case studies in teaching so the real world and the theoretical meet in the classroom. Working managers refer to business gurus such as Peter Drucker and Tom Peters; books like Anderson's "The Long Tail" sit on the best seller lists but anecdotal evidence would suggest that few trustees, museum directors or indeed museum officers in local and regional government have very much knowledge of heritage theory. Heritage policy at national and local levels and heritage practice within grassroots organisations do not necessarily act in unison.

The initial research questions for this doctoral research project are:

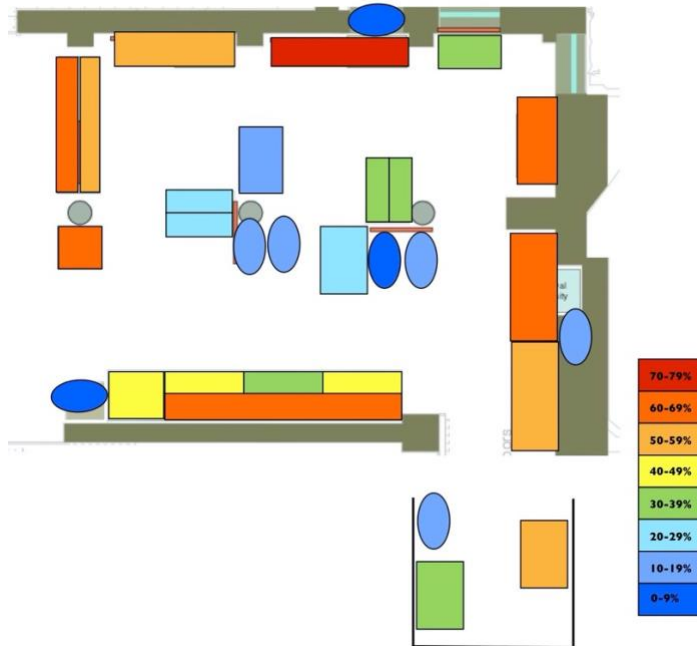
- How is heritage practice shaped by - and how does it shape - the changing academic discourse around what constitutes heritage? How does the changing discourse find its way into policy and then filter down to grassroots organisations?
- Do senior management teams and trustees in heritage organisations understand heritage theory and discourse, how it relates to heritage policy and how it shapes decision making, especially strategic decisions?
- Would it benefit trustees, museum directors or indeed museum officers to better understand heritage theory?
- What is the skills gap in regard of heritage education on trustee boards for smaller museums?

Sarah-Jane Harknett

Sarah-Jane heads up the public engagement programmes at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge.

She is interested in evaluation of museums and galleries, and how venues can move beyond 'I enjoyed my visit'. While new technologies and a better understanding of audiences has changed the way museum interpretation takes place, exhibition evaluation is often still a visitors' book at the end of a display. Visitors are occasionally asked more in-depth questions, but if these are for marketing purposes they rarely move beyond postcode data and demographic information. Deeper questioning and evaluation is frequently linked to specific projects, often externally funded. The opportunity to find out more about the average visitor experience is routinely lost in many heritage sites.

Where there is research on the most effective ways to evaluate permanent displays, suggestions are that an integrated approach, using multiple techniques is most valuable, but this is not always practical. Sarah-Jane is planning to experiment with a variety of evaluation methods, using the museums of the University of Cambridge for case studies. The research will result in a simple, low cost, easy to implement toolkit that can provide deeper, more emotional responses to displays. Sarah-Jane will examine whether sites should vary their questions according to the type of collection or artefact, and ultimately whether the evaluation is itself affecting the visitor experience.



Peter Booth

Peter is currently focused on the growing threat of climate change and the subsequent changes in the environment on the durability of heritage buildings. His research is exploring opportunities for microbial biotechnology in the sustainable preservation of heritage structures such as identifying bioprotective metabolites generated during extreme weather events and incorporating bio-repair mechanisms for traditional building materials. The research is conducted between a heritage site in Shetland, and the University of Hertfordshire Zero Carbon and Microbiology laboratories.

Bioprotection and sustainable preservation of built heritage: Minimising climate accelerated microbial attack on built heritage structures

Climate change threatens communities around the world. Predictive modelling suggests progressive worsening of weather patterns and deteriorating social infrastructures. The climate impact ranges from disruptive to catastrophic. Over several decades extreme weather events have progressively worsened. Rising sea levels, coastal erosion and intense wind driven salt-laden rain are threatening built heritage, risking catastrophic failure of one or more building elements. In addition to physical and chemical attack, weather changes stimulate biological growth and complex microbial responses which impact building substrates.

Peter's doctoral research will explore through case study and publication:

- The effects of climate change on built heritage and the potential acceleration in biodeterioration of traditional materials
- 'Novel biodesign enhancements to at-risk traditional building materials' (published in *Frontiers in Built Environment*, October 2022)
- Development of biopolymers, extracted from environmentally compatible and sustainable sources, to improve the robustness of traditional materials
- The identification and utilisation of bioprotective metabolites against climate driven biodeterioration of heritage structures
- Development of bioprotective surfaces on built heritage structures to strengthen resistance to climate erosion and extend the longevity of stone substrates.

The aim of the research is to design bioprotective mechanisms to combat climate accelerated built heritage deterioration, and to consider wider applications for the outcomes of this study to address climate-driven material erosion.



Sarahjayne Clements

Breaking Barriers: Disability Inclusion in Archaeology

Sarahjayne is a Community Heritage Officer for a local authority and is based in Wales but for several years worked as an archaeologist in various roles. Alongside this, Sarahjayne also volunteers for the Enabled Archaeology Foundation as the Networking and Communications Officer and for the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, where she advises on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Sarahjayne's doctoral research interrogates the issues surrounding disability inclusion in archaeology, with a focus on the workplace. Her research is inspired by her own experiences in the workforce as a disabled person, working part time due to disability. She takes an autoethnographical approach in her methodology to examine the barriers both in the recruitment and retention of disabled people and how these barriers can be broken down.



Sarahjayne working at her standing desk