

<b>Institution: University of Warwick</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 30 History</b>
<b>Title of case study: Parish Matters: The Local and the Making of History</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>The Warwick Network for Parish Research (WNPR) was established in 2003 to facilitate public participation in the making of history, specifically the production of new historical knowledge about parishes from the Middle Ages to the present. Parishes were fundamental units of governance, worship, and everyday life across Europe for over a thousand years, and the primary resources for family and community historians are archived by their parish of generation (in 2010/11 5% of the UK population visited a local record office, 60% of whom were researching family history). WNPR has helped formulate the place of locality in a globalising world and is a point of connection between independent researchers, local history societies, archivists and university-based scholars. It has supported non-academic historians in exploring their communities past and present, built capacity for independent research and writing, and encouraged local historians to contextualise their findings through engagement with wider historical debates.</p> <p>Impact has been achieved in three principal ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <u>increasing public understanding of communities</u> as brought together by links that relate to their locality, heritage, culture and historical experience;</li> <li>2. <u>enriching cultural life</u> through the development of community-based initiatives;</li> <li>3. <u>creating intellectual and methodological tools</u> for scholarship and research opportunities among non-academic historians.</li> </ol>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>Warwick's Parish Network scholars have undertaken pioneering research into the social and cultural history of parish communities in early modern Europe. Exploring local identities, political agency, and the social dynamics of parish life, they have shown how contemporaries negotiated the dramatic religious and cultural changes of the 'long' Reformation, which have had repercussions to the present day. Their work is central to the on-going scholarly re-assessment of 'popular' religion, cultural conflict, political life, social space, commemoration and memorialisation in sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Europe.</p> <p>Professor Bernard Capp (1968-present) is a leading scholar of the cultural, social and religious history of early modern England, notably by his research into local manifestations of Reformation change. He examined the rich ecclesiastical court records of Sileby parish (Leicestershire) from the 1630s to reconstruct the social dynamics of a small community and the role of gossip in personal and village conflict. <i>When Gossips Meet</i> (2003) demonstrated the multiple ways in which non-elite women negotiated patriarchal norms and restrictions and exerted collective pressure on parish officers through informal networks and gossip, playing a role that was hitherto unrecognised in community public life. <i>England's Culture Wars</i> (2012) evaluated the impact and mixed success of the Puritan Reformation in a variety of local contexts during the Interregnum through an examination of parish records, demonstrating the importance of local differences and community structures in this process.</p> <p>Professor Beat Kümin's (2001-present) research into German-speaking Europe examined communal organisation, sociability and conviviality in the early modern period. <i>The Shaping of a Community</i> (1996) emphasised the growing power of parishes in shaping church practice in the late medieval era and local impact on Reformation change. He has also explored the secular dimensions of late medieval parish life, identifying the key feature of 'horizontal' social organisation, the relatively broad level of political participation and the development of local government expertise by 'ordinary' parishioners. <i>The Communal Age in Western Europe</i> (2013) offers a new interpretation of the significance of towns, villages and parishes in the medieval and early modern period: a case-study of the Swiss parish republic of Gersau shows that local communities empowered common people with collective agency and a degree of local autonomy. Republican representation was not an urban prerogative but also existed at the level of the parish.</p> <p>Professor Peter Marshall (1994-present) is one of the UK's leading historians of the English Reformation and has published several seminal works, with a particular focus on the social and political impacts of religious change at a local level. <i>Mother Leakey and the Bishop</i> (2007)</p>

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employed a micro-history of a local Somerset ghost story to examine change and continuity in elite and popular rituals, focussing on changing perceptions of the afterlife, forms of commemoration, and the construction of community memory. This complemented *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (2002), which explored how the conflicting messages of the Tudor Reformation changed understandings of identity and community within a framework of remarkable continuities.

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

- Capp, B., 'Life, Love and Litigation: Sibley in the 1630s', *Past & Present*, 182:1 (2004), 55-83.  
 Capp, B., *England's Culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and its Enemies in the Interregnum, 1649-1660* (Oxford University Press, 2012). [REF2]  
 Kümin, B., 'The Secular Legacy of the Late Medieval English Parish', in C. Burgess and E. Duffy (eds), *The Parish in Later Medieval England*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, XIV (Shaun Tyas, 2006), 95-111 and pl. 1-4.  
 Kümin, B., *The Communal Age in Western Europe c.1100-1800: Towns, Villages and Parishes in Pre-modern Society* (Palgrave, 2013).  
 Marshall, P., *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (Oxford University Press, 2002).  
 Marshall, P., *Mother Leakey and the Bishop: A Ghost Story* (Oxford University Press, 2007; pbk. edn, 2008).

## Evidence of quality:

All publications have been peer-reviewed and favourably reviewed in academic and/or popular media. *Beliefs and the Dead* was described as 'one of the most powerful and persuasive accounts of the cultural impact of the English Reformation yet written' (*Times Literary Supplement*, 21 May 2004) while *Mother Leakey* was judged 'as fine an example of microhistory as is likely to be written' (Craig Harline in *Church History and Religious Culture*) and featured as a 'Pick of the Paperbacks' in the *Sunday Times* (19 October 2008). *England's Culture Wars* was deemed 'a highly significant work which greatly aids our understanding of godly reformation ... a "must read" for all scholars of the period' (*Reviews in History*, review no. 1346, November 2012).

## Research Awards:

**Bernard Capp**

British Academy Research Grant, 'The War of Two Cultures: Godly Reformation and its Enemies in England 1649-60', 2003-04, £3,614.

**Beat Kümin**

British Academy Research Grant, "'Above us only sky": The Swiss Parish Republic of Gersau c.1500-1800', 2011-13, £7,284.

Alfried Krupp Wissenschaftskolleg (Greifswald/Germany) Senior Research Fellowship, 'Communal Culture, Communal Power: Parishes in the Holy Roman Empire', 2012-13, €35,000.

**Peter Marshall**

Leverhulme Trust Research Fellowship, 'Heretics and Believers: A New History of the English Reformation', 2012-13, £28,146.

AHRB Research Leave, 'The Return of Mother Leakey: Ghosts and Stories in Early Modern Britain and Ireland', 2005-06, £10,510.

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

WNPR has highlighted the significance of parish records and, by drawing attention to new intellectual and methodological tools, has encouraged local historians to uncover, interpret and communicate the heritage of their local community or parish. It has prompted members of the general public to connect with their past and to use local history as a means of interrogating social and cultural issues which have relevance today.

Since 2003 the annual Warwick Symposium on Parish Research has provided a forum for knowledge exchange between academics and independent researchers. Supported by a University Impact Award in November 2011 and held in collaboration with the British Association for Local History, attendance figures have tripled in recent years, culminating in the 2012 weekend showcase event, which attracted over 120 delegates (representing archivists, community groups, local history societies, conservation bodies, church groups and academics). The Symposium gives non-academics an opportunity to present their work to large audiences and to discuss local history

projects and new developments in parish research. The new relationships forged through these events have facilitated the exchange of knowledge and skills between 'amateur' and 'professional' historians. The opportunity to interact with others engaged in parish research was highlighted as particularly important by independent researchers: it brought the benefits of 'fresh approaches for my own work' and 'much more awareness of the broad range of parish research, useful contacts made or renewed, and useful feedback on my talk'. In post-event feedback after the Tenth Anniversary Symposium (25-27.05.12), 54% of non-academic respondents stated that their study of the parish had been enhanced by dialogue with fellow researchers. Responding to a request made in the concluding panel discussion at the 2012 Symposium, the Network collaborated with two local history societies to host the 2013 Parish Symposium in Berkswell, Warwickshire (25.05.13). It attracted a capacity audience of 87 (predominantly non-academic) and further extended the WNPR's reach, with 69% of participants attending the Symposium for the first time.

My-Parish.org (launched November 2012) is a public and community resource linking WNPR scholars with local historians, history societies and community groups. It showcases research, forges collaborations, and highlights the range of rich source materials available for parish and community history, art, heritage and culture. Since its launch the website has been visited by 3,928 users across the world, with the highest numbers from the UK, US, Germany, and China. Total page views to July 31<sup>st</sup> are 14,444. Resources made available include an extensive bibliography of printed primary and secondary works in several languages, research guides, audio and visual materials and digitised archival sources. These provide independent researchers with a broad range of new tools for conducting and extending the scope of their work. In 1,907 views of the 'Parish Research' page (since November 2012) the most used sections were the bibliographies and digital parish sources, sections which provide basic tools for new researchers. Bibliographic tools have developed amateur historians' background knowledge, access to information and understanding of local histories. My-Parish users praised the 'excellent bibliography' as 'the most useful part of the website'. The My-Parish forum has fostered closer connections between individuals and groups engaged in research. Its users acknowledge the benefits of communication and increased awareness of others' research: 'It is useful to know what is going on elsewhere ... As someone living in Warwickshire but on the edge of Leicestershire I do feel that local history can get compartmentalised into counties and so I miss interesting links and connections.'

Through our research into parish life, we have stimulated wider public interest in the heritage of local communities and increased public knowledge of local history. Capps' *Past & Present* article (2004) prompted the Sibley Local History Group to pursue its own local research into ecclesiastical court records. The Chair of the group commented that the article formed 'the backbone of research for early seventeenth-century Sibley'. Via public talks the researchers have engaged diverse audiences, including local history societies, community groups and schools throughout the UK and Europe, particularly in Northamptonshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. In September 2008, Marshall addressed National Trust volunteers and the general public at Coughton Court on the Throckmorton family's influence on the local Reformation. Kumin delivered a talk in October 2010 to the Kineton Local History Group on its parish history, described by the audience as 'accessible' and 'extremely interesting', leaving them 'hungry for more'. Network members have also worked actively with local history groups to produce genuinely collaborative works of public history: Kumin was invited to direct the steering committee for a history of the Parish of St Mary Immaculate (Warwick). Published in 2009, the book *Catholic Warwick* was launched with a public panel debate involving Kumin and Marshall, and attended by 50 parishioners. Available in local bookstores and the parish church, several hundred copies have gone in to circulation. Kumin's research on communal self-reflection in Gersau, Switzerland, prompted district authorities to approve his proposal for bicentenary events celebrating the restoration of a parish republic in 1814 and to invite him onto the planning committee. As historical consultant, he helped design events that will give local residents the opportunity to commemorate their unique past and to reflect on its relevance for contemporary issues, such as centralisation and globalisation.

The WNPR's research has reached large audiences through broadcast and print media. Capp acted as a specialist expert for the popular BBC 1 series *Who Do You Think You Are*, appearing in episode 5, series 6 (02.03.09; audience 6 million), and also contributed to BBC 4's *Roundhead or*

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*Cavalier* (15.05.12). Marshall appeared in two episodes of Channels 4's *Gods and Monsters*, attracting a viewing audience of 880,000 (03.12.11). The significance of Marshall's research is evidenced by invited contributions to BBC Radio 3 programmes: 'The Enduring Appeal of Angels', *Nightwaves* (18.03.10) and 'William Byrd and Catholicism', *Twenty Minutes* (05.12.12). Marshall presented an edition of the BBC Radio 4 series *The Essay*, which examined Henry VIII's relationship with God (06.04.10). Marshall wrote articles for the popular magazines *History Today* (readership c. 50,000): 'Sex, Scandal and the Supernatural' (vol. 52, issue 2, 2007) and *BBC History Magazine* (readership c. 70,000) 'The Ghost that Convicted the Bishop' (vol. 8, issue 2, 2007).

Through connecting independent researchers and local history societies with academic scholarship, the WNPR has stimulated the use of new archival, bibliographical and research materials, has broadened knowledge of methodological approaches and historical perspectives to local history, and suggested new visions of a community past.

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

My-Parish online community and resources:  
<http://my-parish.org> Google Analytics Report

Warwick Symposium for Parish Research 2012, post-symposium participant feedback.

Local media coverage of the launch of *Catholic Warwick*: 'Warwick Catholic History Investigated', *Leamington Spa Courier*, 16.11.09.

Email correspondence between Sibley Local History Society and Bernard Capp.

Swiss media coverage of Kumin's role in Gersau's bicentenary celebrations; 'Ich bezeichne Gersau als Extremfall', *Bote der Urschweiz*, 30.08.12.

Gersau District Council Minutes, June 2012, recording bicentenary approval and funding.

#### Public Talks:

Beat Kumin, 'Development of a Parish': a public talk to Kineton and District Local History Group, October 2010 (<http://www.kinetonhistory.co.uk/?s=beat+kumin>).

Peter Marshall, 'The Catholic Gentry in English Society': public talk at Throckmorton Literary Festival, September 2008 <http://www.spaghettagazetti.com/2008/08/throckmorton-literary-festival-at.html>

#### Media:

Marshall, BBC Radio 3 *Twenty Minutes*: a discussant on 'William Byrd and Catholicism', 05.03.10  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01cvp35>

Bernard Capp, BBC 1 *Who Do You Think You Are*, 02.03.09

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/whodoyouthinkyuare/how-we-did-it/kevin-whately/how-we-did-it-4.shtml>  
(BARB audience figure, 6 million)