Sedimented Histories: Connections, Collaborations and Co-production in Regional History
by Sarah Lloyd and Julie Moore

In the early 1990s Raphael Samuel, taking stock of history, emphasized the toil of people he called the 'under-labourers', those responsible for a vast repository of 'unofficial' histories circulating quite separately from the products of late twentieth-century academic disciplines.[1] His was a sociological and historical account in which a 'thousand different hands' in every generation shaped their own engagements with the past and harnessed its power to their own concerns. And while Samuel charted a predominantly British scene, sharpened by postwar social change, Thatcherism, and a distinctive class-inflected cultural politics, he saw historical consciousness as the stuff of being human, with deep roots in language, popular memory, childhood, landscape, identity and imagination. To adapt Samuel's own characterization of heritage, history is pluralist, capacious and nomadic, putting 'down roots . . . in seemingly quite unpromising terrain' as well as in familiar spots.[2]

Twenty-five years on, historical culture has absorbed new digital technologies and fresh preoccupations, including the current enthusiasm for public anniversaries. But Samuel was also interested in the structures that created under-labourers and invisible hands in the fields of history, in the social forms of knowledge and not just its content. Thus the History Workshop model that he had pioneered since the 1960s was itself an important intervention in the hierarchical conventions and processes he observed.[3] Political commitments to history from below, which galvanized many participatory research projects and studies of historical awareness, were products of their own times. Since its first issue in 1976, *History Workshop Journal* has regularly shown academically-trained historians giving serious attention to grassroots projects, writing from their own communities and experience, and bringing a historical perspective to contemporary debates.[4]

In the early twenty-first century fresh streams have converged to reconfigure relationships between unofficial and academic histories in Britain. Parallel developments in other disciplines – around memory work, the politics of space and methods of action research, for example – have theoretical

University of Hertfordshire   *s.v.lloyd@herts.ac.uk*
University of Hertfordshire   *j.p.2.moore@herts.ac.uk*

and practical consequences for many historians' discussions of place, identity and belonging.[5] Potentially closing the distance between popular stories and formal knowledge, professional attention can also introduce new distinctions, language and hierarchies. Powerful new incentives have entered a field previously characterized by personal enthusiasm and political commitment. Government policies and agents emphasize 'community' and give history a role in repairing and fostering social relationships;[6] on the European continent, activism around the 'civil society organization' invokes a rather different political framework, but demonstrates similar priorities.[7] The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), on the scene since 1994 to distribute money from the UK government's national lottery franchise, has replaced local and national government as a major source of financial support for a vast range of organizations concerned with 'heritage', broadly defined.[8] Much UK archaeological work is determined by the planning system (in turn creating a substantial infrastructure of 'under-labourers' on commercial contracts).[9] In British Higher Education 'research impact' and talk initially of 'knowledge transfer' and then less patronizingly of 'knowledge exchange' have cut across older discussions about putting history to use. The major academic funding bodies in the UK, the Research Councils, now promote multi-disciplinary research on the changing nature of communities and collaborate with HLF to encourage university participation in local projects.[10]

Discussion of co-production, or 'research with, by and for communities', currently emphasizes accountability, relevance and ethical management of unequal power relations: it is the latest formulation of an impulse found across twentieth-century Britain in university extension courses and voluntary organizations.[11] Academic engagement with local and regional histories is far from new, of course, with roots in the Victoria County History (founded in 1899 and itself strongly influenced by eighteenth and nineteenth-century antiquarian themes) and, from the 1930s, in W. G. Hoskins's pioneering work at Leicester which brought new social and economic questions to historical studies of landscape and place.[12] Archaeology had long been a participatory and local venture before it too developed a specific sub-genre dedicated to community engagement and empowerment.[13] In this article we examine recent developments in Britain and their implications for future ventures in hands-on public history. Through our experiences as two university-based historians who increasingly spend our time in the company of local researchers, not least as beneficiaries of Research Council funding, we reconsider Samuel's picture of those 'under-labourers' in the field of history and the changing infrastructure in which we all work. Aware of so many projects and so many voices to hear, we are particularly exercised by the question of what happens to the knowledge created. We tentatively propose a concept of 'sedimented histories' as a means of putting stories into circulation while also respecting the diversity of interests and priorities that created them.

To set our own work within its sense of place, the English county of Hertfordshire sits to the north of London, and since Tudor times its patterns of landownership and population growth have reflected the influence of the capital whose heart lies less than ten miles from the county's southern border. For those whose economic prosperity rested on their presence at the royal and law courts, the counting house and the commercial warehouse, Hertfordshire offered the opportunity to fulfil social aspirations with a landed estate within a day's ride of the City or Westminster.[14] Although a small county of only 1,638 square kilometres, lines of communication have traditionally centred on London; there are no cross-county rail links and while today the M25 motorway does cut an arc across the southern portion of the county, the major 'A' roads (often of Roman origin) all radiate from London towards the North, Midlands and East Anglia.

As rail links developed in the nineteenth century, wealthy professionals saw in the county an opportunity to move their families away from the smells and dangers of London while still being able to commute to work. They were joined in the early twentieth century by people attracted to the new Garden Cities of Letchworth and Welwyn Garden, and later by those displaced by bombs and bulldozers who relocated after 1945 to the New Towns of Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead and Stevenage. In 2011 the population numbered 1,116,062, making the county one of the most densely populated in England, and of these 15.58% were over the age of sixty-five and 80.82% were of white British ethnicity as defined in the 2011 census.[15] The county continues to be popular with those commuting into London, which is reflected in high property prices and villages to the north of the county almost deserted during the day whilst the car parks for railway stations leading to King's Cross, Euston, St Pancras and Liverpool Street are full.[16]

Alongside the narrative of a rural county of small towns, Hertfordshire also has a history of manufacturing, from brewing, paper and straw hats to more recently aviation, pharmaceuticals and the newer technologies. The University of Hertfordshire where we work has its roots in the development of the aircraft and associated engineering industries, starting life as one of the post-1945 technical colleges which were conceived with the idea of improving skills and making Britain more competitive. The College grew in tandem with the New Town of Hatfield in which it sat, and the early leadership, conscious of that expanding population on its doorstep, developed a series of short courses targeted at raising aspirations and skills.[17] Later initiatives continued the tradition of community engagement: in the Hatfield Historical Research Resources Project (1991) volunteers from across the county gathered to collect and analyse data from the 1851 census;[18] and in 1998, the University supported Hatfield residents in collecting oral histories to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Hatfield New Town (1998). Ten years on the HLF-funded Hatfield Aerodrome Community Heritage Project (2009–11) worked with former employees of

the Aerodrome, local residents, schools, Hertfordshire Archives, and Digswell Arts Trust to collect memories and raise awareness of the engineering heritage of the area.[19] It is in projects such as these that the University's Heritage Hub has its origins.

Established in 2010 and initially led by staff from the History department, the Heritage Hub is a multi-disciplinary body intended to serve a number of purposes. It connects staff across a large higher-education institution where the possibilities for complementary projects had been missed, and it also serves as a simple point of contact for people beyond the University campus looking to involve staff in local initiatives or to link with others in the wider region working on similar ideas.[20] Hertfordshire has a good number of local history societies (at the last count we were in contact with around thirty-five), some of which can trace their origins to a nineteenth-century antiquarian tradition of human and natural histories.[21] Prominent too is the legacy of Lionel Munby who from 1946 encouraged study of the county through the University of Cambridge's Board of Extra-Mural studies: his classes inspired many to explore stories from their own locality. The rigour that Munby brought to local history, and his political commitment to history from below, gave groups the confidence to publish their work for both a local and wider audience.[22] Nationally, his efforts link back to the Workers' Educational Association (est. 1903) and forward to the History Workshop movement.

As members of the University's Heritage Hub, we two have encountered history and heritage projects in diverse local settings, leading us to topics we would never have considered otherwise; their sheer variety has made us re-think our understandings of what history means and how it is made. We have experienced the power of storytelling as an organizing principle.[23] Over the last few years, for example, we have worked with a football supporters' club, a scout troop, a museum dedicated to the paper industry, local businesses, learning-disability activists and residents' associations, as well as with local history societies. These and many other initiatives are run by formally-constituted membership organizations, heritage professionals and ad hoc groups brought together by a shared interest. Many of the projects we encounter are grounded in a sense of place, which in a region so close to London may or may not be transient. But there are other sorts of community too – some fleeting, others more enduring: communities of experience, belief, practice, expertise or circumstance, for example. For some groups we are a sounding board, a way of testing what might be achievable: the two of us will listen and chat. For others we are a signpost to new sources, different questions and fellow enthusiasts,[24] or in a few cases, full partners in exploring a theme or story.

Whatever their circumstances, Hertfordshire heritage projects share characteristics with ventures across the region and beyond. Those familiar with the scholarship on public history, which is increasingly explored as an international phenomenon, will recognize these features and how they have come

to constitute the terms in which the field is often discussed: stories and/or orientations of place; discoveries of what it means to belong; emotional travels in time; collections – adoptions, even – of lost voices, both the expected and the unfamiliar; the power of memory, residence or expertise, which explorations of the past can consolidate and legitimate, so that the very process of historical engagement influences present-day relationships (a phenomenon not always experienced positively).[25] Patterns of continuity and change, contested memories and the contours of identity can be challenging experiences. Research generates exhilaration, passions and frustrations: from successful detective work and group sociability, to missing records, participants lost to other activities, disagreements, even conflicts. We have seen elaborate plans to capture memories on film fail as people refuse to be interviewed for reasons that are not always clear; strong commitments to social inclusion do not always create dialogue. Commitment to place can entail an indifference to locations even a few miles away, let alone further afield. So there are issues around managing material and expectations; seeing the bigger picture and living with gaps are not always straightforward. Academic historians can make a virtue out of silence or of memories that stubbornly refuse to conform to other narratives, but community researchers are less entranced by these possibilities if they are driven by a desire to preserve and catalogue memorabilia as a conscious act of standing within time: 'we are history makers and should not be forgotten'.[26] It is this imperative that also energizes questions about who owns the past and how it is used.

Funding can shape purpose too. The HLF has had a major impact as its programmes and application-forms direct groups to think about processes, notably 'learning'.[27] Where amateurs (in no pejorative sense) simply follow their love of the past, those with HLF grants have more awareness of an end game. The responsibility to account for monies spent brings with it a focus on delivery and demonstrable outcomes. Thus the organizer of one village High Street project kept bringing volunteers back to the High Street properties insisting that other themes were put on one side for now. Collaborative research rather than individual pursuit of a story brings the reward of shared knowledge and new skills, but can also require firmer control of researchers and material, which on occasion weighs very heavily on those who lead such groups. For many participants the stories are paramount, but expectations that history serves as an instrument to realize social or policy objectives, from community cohesion to competence in new skills, sit in the background as one influence on the projects. What is their effect on the creation of historical knowledge, on historical imagination?

We do well to remember the 'love of history' that so many of those who are members of local history or community groups choose to emphasize in our conversations, as a way of claiming some right to tell their story: sometimes just a few people meeting to talk about how it used to be, sometimes a more ambitious group who want to engage in what has been described to us

as 'proper research'. These people give time, energy and often money to deliver something which they want taken seriously; inability to find an appreciative wider audience can be a source of great frustration to those who want to share their historical passions. What they mean by love of history is hard to pin down, for them as well as for the two of us. In looking at the demographics we can see that in the groups we know best, the majority of those who attend meetings are over sixty, with many in their seventies and eighties who are running the committees for want of younger retirees to take their place. We have strong personal commitments to inclusivity but even so we are aware that our contacts are not representative of the county as a whole, and that confidence and prior knowledge of the university, as well as academic and professional experience, do structure and privilege certain relationships.[28]

Prioritizing active participation, another preoccupation of public historians, can be complicated.[29] Local history societies based in the county's towns and larger villages routinely bring large audiences of fifty to a hundred for their lecture series, although meetings of ten people are not uncommon in some places; specialist societies attract groups from twenty upwards, but it is probably the county's U3A (University of the Third Age) meetings that secure the largest regular attendance, of 150+, for historical topics.[30] Where a group seems relatively homogenous in demographic terms – age, ethnic background – members often have markedly different interests. A common pattern therefore emerges of a small number of members, perhaps half a dozen, keen to share a programme of research. Others express interest but do not participate actively, sometimes because of physical and financial constraints such as distances to be negotiated on public transport, the cost of making copies, lack of confidence on computers, fear of the rules around record offices etc. For a substantial proportion of members, meetings serve as an opportunity for social engagement and research is just not what they signed up to; a few are concerned that giving up what they think of as 'their' information will somehow compromise it. And while geographical location is often important in determining theme and membership, projects can attract a small but significant cohort of loyal and enthusiastic participants who live elsewhere but share a passion for the subject (railway history is a good example).

Our aim throughout has been to support all potential participants. We encourage where we can, dispelling the idea that research is only for the institutionally-trained historian and introducing the beauty of collaborative history as a process of taking everyone's contribution to build a bigger picture. Recognition that expertise is widely distributed and can be shared has a powerful effect, although issues around money and authority do not disappear. As university-based historians we are increasingly aware of, and at times awed by, the knowledge held within these groups and created through their projects. The St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society, for instance, drew on its extensive archive to embark

on a study of First World War military tribunals long before the National Archives publicized the survival of the Middlesex tribunal papers or the topic was widely covered in the media: their research reinterprets a common elision of military exemption with conscientious objection (as the major group coming before the local military tribunal, hat-makers have outnumbered Quakers, Seventh Day Adventists and the vegetarians of Letchworth Garden City).[31] A rather different example is provided by the Hertfordshire paper industry, which declined rapidly almost to the point of extinction in the final decades of the twentieth century. The last mill was rescued from demolition in 2000 and a Paper Trail archive group was established to reconstruct the historical minutiae of the Dickinson Company and document the global impact of paper.[32] A by-product of this research has been to reorient the historical geography of the county in terms of a watery topography, with boats servicing the mills and the waterside location of work creating an industrial landscape that intersects with a longer view of water, from the Jacobean New River Project, supplying London from the east of the county, to Dickinson's paper mills along the Gade Valley in the west. It is the intensity and focus of the archive group's quest, as well as the documentary evidence they explore, that create a new perspective on Hertfordshire's long interaction with the capital.

We are also conscious of disparities between the visions of history expressed in these projects – including differences of opinion among participants themselves on how to use material and where to lodge their sources – and our own interests and practices. There's a refreshing freedom in being able to develop research threads and claim historical pasts without any obligation to follow a curriculum or research programme. We have written funding applications to support community heritage projects (for instance via the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Connected Communities programme),[33] central to which are delicate mechanisms of suggestion and response as well as ethical questions about why anyone would want to collaborate with us. Whilst members of the University's Heritage Hub have knowledge of the records and history of the county, they had little to offer about branch railway lines, helmet manufacture, migration from the Indian sub-continent or children's play in the 1960s, all of which figured in the HLF-funded projects we worked with closely in 2013.

Through these experiences we have developed ideas relating to collaboration and co-production that we did not necessarily set out with. While neither of us knew the colour of trains passing through Smallford station on the Hatfield–St Albans branch line in 1930 (the answer to that finer point of detail was 'teak'), we did already know from another local history group that further along the line the Salvation Army had its printing press, and – from a University network meeting of all places – that banana-ripening warehouses lay beyond that.[34] From a neighbouring halt, nurserymen dispatched orchids to suburban households where an imperial middle class manifested wealth and identity through displays of exotic flowers. A project

like Smallford's, which is concerned with a disused ticket office on a dis-
mantled branch line, is therefore also about a lost world moving past the
platform, a story of global currents, with bananas, plants, workers and
copies of *War Cry* carried along the track as signs of the broader ties that
enmeshed the village and shaped the conditions of its development, includ-
ing the memories which now survive. The connections are not always direct
or explicit, but they are evocative and this quality can suggest ideas and
questions beyond the collection and archiving of material. By insisting that
this particular story matters, the imagination and enthusiasm of the group
transforms a set of facts into a living history and as word gets round new
sources emerge, via a passing postman perhaps, or an earlier researcher or
an amateur film collector.[35]

In some senses we act in relation to these projects as a memory exchange
and we bring to them particularly academic preoccupations with compari-
son and context. These fascinate us and many of the groups (but not all of
them) as techniques for understanding the past and re-examining perceived
certainties. And this is where the collaborative element gets more interesting.
Given that there is no reason why any community history project should
follow a specific agenda, how might we nurture broader historical dimen-
sions? Indeed is it our place to do that? One possibility is offered by digital
mapping: the potential for one person's or group's specific history to
become available to others who are piecing together another picture, per-
haps one with different boundaries of time and place. Since control of in-
formation can become a pressing issue in local-history circles, we looked for
a way that left ownership with the originators but opened the possibility of
synthesis and participatory analysis. Although we are only in the early stages
of experimentation here, we are working with Historypin, a not-for-profit
social enterprise, to create a Hertfordshire site that through the very process
of recording discrete pieces of information creates a context for them and
puts them into dialogue with other dispersed items.[36] Local historians may
be concerned about proper use of material and the dangers of interference –
the idea of unknown others revising their work is generally disliked – but
they are also worried about survival. While bodies like HLF urge groups to
create a digital presence, this is always vulnerable to problems of mainten-
ance as enthusiasm wanes, key members leave or technology changes. So a
promise that an institution, such as a university, will keep material accessible
in the longer term – in effect memorialize the group's endeavours – is very
attractive.[37] If others draw on it for their own projects, well and good:
responsibility is clearly allocated.

Online community archives have pioneered this model to tremendous
effect, so it is important not to duplicate.[38] What we need is a means of
gathering resources that by its very nature creates new insights. This brings
us back to the railway branch line: if we add the Salvation Army, orchids
and bananas to the map, we bring a context to Smallford and we range
beyond the narrow thread represented by the track itself. This may interest

the group (remember it is not compulsory), but crucially material becomes available to many more people. Through acting as memory exchange and prompter of context, digital mapping brings knowledge of spaces and relationships between things into view: countering the more fissiparous tendencies of the internet, the whole does become greater than its constituent parts and we are all encouraged to see new things, a potentially enfranchising process.[39] Researchers, wherever they are located, add material and probe the horizons of their specific projects. From our perspective, it puts the global into the local and vice versa: we can explore what the trains carried, where they came from and were going to; we can connect otherwise discrete projects and themes across the region; we can explore stories that unfolded over time and co-existed in space.[40] Since the aim of co-production is to generate knowledge and experiences that are unlikely to emerge through more orthodox academic processes, this technique enables us to explore the scope and limits of collaboration: are some historical topics more suitable or productive than others, for example?

So far, so innocuous, but what happens when participants in a single project have different memories to tell, or divide over their purpose (collecting material or creating a social history), when groups have stories at odds with those recounted by other groups (about origins or where people belong, for instance), or when individual or collective accounts conflict with national, official or promotional histories (perhaps about the treatment of specific groups or responses to crisis)? This can generate passing interest or rival claims to factual accuracy. Combined with that sense of ownership around research or those feelings of identity that history is sometimes made to serve, the stakes are raised: when length of residence or birth is assumed by some but not all to give greater authenticity or access to the past (even when the ostensible focus of a project is the experience of recent arrivals), who is authorized to speak? The shadow of the present and fears of libel push some participants into whitewashing quite mild as well as more challenging evidence. Collecting histories, memories and stories to hold them alongside one another, bringing the potential of new contexts to change relationships between previously-held certainties, strike us as a productive use of academic expertise: not a historical court of adjudication, but a place where different accounts can co-exist, so that the story of high-street shopping in previous decades elicits appreciation of the choice offered by Tesco's new supermarket, as well as a longing for the tea shop.[41] To express this and the time it takes to create relationships of trust, we have coined the term 'sedimented histories'. Where voices and memories are contested or perspectives fragmented, where elements of the past are differently weighted or valued, we are aiming to create a 'sediment' of connected, but not necessarily uniform histories: rather like Raphael Samuel's view of the built environment as 'a sediment of geological strata, a multi-layered reality',[42] sedimented histories are available over time, adjacent to one another, but not thrust into a competition for survival of the historically fittest.

The First World War centenary is an opportunity to test this out through a Research Council initiative to connect academic and public histories of the war.[43] As part of the *Everyday Lives in War* AHRC Engagement Centre, we are aware of radically different perspectives held by individuals and groups across the region. Differences are emerging between government or official commemorations and local projects. The language used reveals considerable variation in response to the conflict and its legacies: is the focus on the 'sacrifice' of lives or about work endured; to what extent are 'we' – whoever 'we' are in the present – connected to 'them' (and which 'them' – young men named on memorials, ancestors recruited continents away, or the county's considerable prewar asylum population already affected by the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act)? Is this a military story; what about the circumstances in which war was only in peripheral vision? What happens when comparisons are drawn between 1914–18 and militarization in present-day Britain?[44] What is the purpose of all this centenary activity; is this history as preparation or prelude to remembering, or an experience of walking in step with the past? The thorny issues of which centenary is marked, when it began (and what present-day events provide unanticipated commentary), are evident in the rash of BBC programmes in early 2014, in the Republic of Ireland's decade of centenaries (2012–22), and in Australia's anticipation of Gallipolli, and are mirrored locally in research already completed or yet to be started.[45]

In his history of families, John Gillis distinguished between the families we live by and those we live with.[46] His observation has intriguing resonance for public history too, not least because genealogy mediates so much historical activity.[47] The families we live with are the ones that form our everyday experiences and condition our social relationships – we might say that they are realities of family, in the sense that they are accessible to observers, who might measure time spent together or map ties of birth and commitment. By contrast, the families we live by are the stories, the hopes and imaginings, which fuel the rituals of family life and create the longings which we try to fulfil. And of course because we are living by and longing for these other families, they too are part of our experience and often difficult to separate out from everyday lives.

There are histories we live with and histories we live by. The histories we live by are those that often stand out in heritage projects in a language of celebration and collectivity: they are the stories we tell ourselves about ancestors, perhaps about steam trains and village life; accounts of survival and sacrifice, of tragedy and morality; exceptional stories of murderers, pioneers or inventors; talk of 'characters' whose bloody-mindedness is savoured as if they were fictional creations. At the same time we are all living, often unwittingly, with histories of place, generation and connection: they too shape conditions of life but in different ways and language. The histories we live with are often clearest when seen from outside: raw histories of oppression, for instance, can be hard to accommodate. In 2007, most

public exhibitions marking the bicentenary of the abolition of the British slave trade focused on the abolition campaign rather than on British involvement in the trade itself.[48] Histories we live with can come into conflict with histories we live by: where personal and collective memory are at odds with one another, the outcome can be a forgetting or silencing of individual recollections which have no place to go.[49] Until very recently, for example, the families of men who were shot for desertion in the First World War lived with their histories: the campaign for a public pardon and changing social attitudes have now made them histories to live by, encapsulated in the prominent 'Shot at Dawn' memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum.[50] The histories we live by can heighten sensitivity to others' uses of material, or favour particular lines of enquiry, suggesting why so many First World War projects start with a local war memorial. Like families, the histories we live by generate stories and cultural practices that are intensely real to all involved but exclude those ill-attuned to them.

In a modest way, sedimented histories aim to accommodate both the histories we live with and those we live by, allowing us to consider the ways in which certain local and regional stories are privileged. Allowing histories to settle alongside one another may encourage us to recognize the differences and connections between them, to experiment with context and scale, and to acknowledge, if not always adopt, the rituals and associations loaded onto them. We are optimistic about these possibilities, but the situations we live in constantly press on the ideas we want to live out. Archives are increasingly required to manage their holdings as a commercial asset, reducing the scope for sharing material under creative commons licences.[51] While a university offers the prospect of sustainability in a post-industrial landscape where library, arts and archive services are subject to government cuts, institutional longevity alone does not guarantee a commitment to collaborative grassroots partnerships. The shifting sands of higher-education policy and funding, competing demands on university technology – from the whims of marketing to intellectual property and the legalities of access to digital resources – and the effects of staff turnover, all suggest reasons for caution. Research Council funding has had unanticipated consequences too, creating a suspicion in some community partners that we will only work with them while the grant lasts: a doubt that reinforces the importance of the personal commitments that underpin collaborations on all sides and make them vulnerable.[52] Ensuring that a university-community partnership is a symbiotic relationship, not a parasitic one, requires constant adjustment of complex and unequal power relations. A couple of thousand pounds is a lot of money for a community group, surely one of the most efficient research organizations, but is negligible in University terms, where funding applications with oncosts and overheads operate on a completely different scale. When large budgets generate academic prestige, research value becomes monetized; similarly, current moves

to pay community partners are an important acknowledgement of their contributions and the economic barriers to participation, but how far will this also commodify activity and shift collaboration into an explicit market framework?[53] There are some interesting mismatches too. Familiar with the language of academic impact and knowledge exchange, we have been struck how often groups look for confidence building and help with project management instead. Sometimes it is just a case of showing how a group's key phrases contain the seeds of historical investigation: 'I heard a story that . . . .'; 'it went with the times'. While students' employment skills are high on teaching agendas, connecting student volunteers with local projects in mutually beneficial ways has been surprisingly difficult. In practice, building relationships between undergraduates and community groups requires intensive management of expectations on both sides, while aligning student and project timetables only creates further pressures.

With echoes of Raphael Samuel's invisible hands and their unofficial histories, academic and official bodies increasingly recognize grassroots projects and diverse outputs. The insistence on democratizing research, which in a Hertfordshire context Lionel Munby promoted, remains relevant in changing economic and social contexts, although the groups which Munby helped to found are themselves facing an ageing membership and adapting to a different and frequently digital landscape. Current interest in co-production therefore creates opportunities for new relationships: what will they look like from the perspective of 2050 or beyond? Will participation in a project enhance historical understanding for everyone involved? Will the image of under-labourers still seem appropriate, and as a description of whom? Answers to such questions will depend on how histories are used in globalized settings, on development of a framework to sustain a notion of distributed research and expertise, and on the political contexts in which institutions and community groups/civil society organizations interact. Sedimented histories are one step in creating an approach and narratives for such collaborations.

Sarah Lloyd is Reader in History at the University of Hertfordshire where she has held several Arts & Humanities Research Council Connected Communities grants. *Partners in History* (2013) supported projects funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund's All Our Stories scheme. Since January 2014, she has led the AHRC First World War Engagement Centre, *Everyday Lives in War*.

Julie Moore is Deputy Director of the University of Hertfordshire's Heritage Hub with a particular interest in agriculture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 2014 she joined *Everyday Lives in War* as an Early Career Researcher, having held a similar position on the 2013 *Partners in History* project.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, London, 1994, pp. 3–48. There are interesting parallels with the UK archaeology world where in recent years the value of 'grey literature' has been increasingly recognized: see for example http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/about/ ADSOnline24Highlights (accessed 20 Feb. 2015).

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13 Yvonne Marshall 'What is Community Archaeology?', *World Archaeology* 34: 2, 2002; The Council for British Archaeology's Community Archaeology Forum, http://www.britarch. ac.uk/caf/wikka.php?wakka=AboutCAF (accessed 13 Feb. 2015).

14 Anne Rowe and Tom Williamson, *Hertfordshire: a Landscape History*, Hatfield, 2013; Julie P. Moore, *The Impact of Agricultural Depression and Landownership Change on the County of Hertfordshire, c.1870–1914*, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Hertfordshire, 2010.

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16 In 2014 average property prices were higher than in neighbouring counties: Hertfordshire (£356,419), Bedfordshire (£222,706), Essex (£261,230) and Cambridgeshire (£241,896) www.right-move.co.uk/house-prices-in-Hertfordshire.html (accessed 30 December 2014).

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19 Davies, *University of Hertfordshire*, pp. 71, 91; de Havilland Airfield Community Heritage Project, http://www.herts.ac.uk/heritage-hub/heritage-and-history-projects/de-havilland-airfield-community-heritage-project (accessed 22 Aug. 2014).

20 http://www.herts.ac.uk/heritage-hub (accessed 22 Aug. 2014).

21 The St Albans Architectural and Archaeological Society was established in 1845 and covered a range of local history subjects in its early publications; it has recently renamed itself as the St Albans and Hertfordshire Architectural and Archaeological Society http://www.stalbanshistory.org (accessed 15 Feb. 2015). The East Hertfordshire Archaeological Society was founded in 1899 http://www.ehas.org.uk (accessed 15 Feb. 2015). *The Victoria History of the County of Hertford*, ed. William Page, 4 vols, London, 1902–14.

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32 http://www.thepapertrail.org.uk/ (accessed 22 Aug. 2014).

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