

Collaborative Doctoral Awards Studentship Competition (Project-led)



**Arts and
Humanities
Research Council**

Project Title:	Mapping the Cultural Geography of Sam Henry’s Irish Song Archive	
Project Summary:	This will be the doctoral examination of the Sam Henry collection of traditional Irish song with a literary and cultural geography approach. Henry’s archive, held by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, of approximately 15,000 textual materials, is one of the most significant collections of song, photography and folklore in the British Isles. The project will map and analyse the significance of the sense of place that Henry’s archive constructs and will examine how local place impacts upon the gathering of song, and how culture can be identified through the manifestation of song, folklore and local history.	
Institution:	Ulster University	
Partner Organisation:	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Museum Services	
Primary AHRC Subject Area:	English Language and Literature	
Creative Practice Component:	Yes	

For further information and to submit an expression of interest, please contact:			
Lead Supervisor:	Frank Ferguson	Email:	f.ferguson@ulster.ac.uk
EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN:			6 January 2020

Project Description:
<p><i>I had my existence. I was there.</i> <i>Me in place and the place in me</i> <i>(A Herbal, Human Chain, 2010)</i></p> <p>The Sam Henry archive embodies the significance of Seamus Heaney’s celebration of the significance of place upon existence. It is one of the most important collections of traditional song in the British Isles. Held and managed by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, it contains over 15,000 artefacts among which are materials relating to approximately 800 songs which Sam Henry gathered in the north of Ireland between 1920-1950. His focus into the song tradition of an area across much of the northern counties of Antrim and Derry/Londonderry yielded much richness and variety of source material. The Council’s Museum Services have been working with the collection as appropriate external funding has been secured. As a result, the archive has recently been catalogued to museum standard and digitised onto www.niarchive.org. Since 2009 Public awareness has been raised through three developmental exhibitions and, over the last three years, a programme of community engagement workshops. This has prepared the way for serious academic investigation to begin into comprehending the archive. This is timely for a number of reasons.</p>

1. To date no sustained, in depth monograph exists of Sam Henry’s methodology and impact and this will be the first project to attempt to explore, contextualise and analyse Henry’s approach and collection.
2. At present there is an extensive re-evaluation of what constitutes indigenous “culture” in Northern Ireland amid the backdrop of concerns about Brexit, the present political impasse a generation after the Good Friday Agreement, and questions raised on Northern Irish identity as we move towards the examination of its centenary as a state in 2021. The Sam Henry archive provides a very fertile collection to analyse and understand the cultural underpinnings of a broad cross communal area in the first half of the twentieth century.
3. Given that concerns about space, the local and the locale are so prevalent in the collection. The archive provides a very strong foundation to examine song lyric within a geographical setting and to illustrate this through geo-mapping.

The doctoral project provides considerable opportunity to work directly with the team that has developed the archive, to create a significant research portfolio based on the collection and develop industry based skills, capabilities and experience that will enhance the candidate’s career prospects.

The research questions that the project will explore are:

1. How does the lyrics of Sam Henry’s collection create a sense of place and community.
2. Which major themes and concerns arise from the lyrics.
3. How can this be mapped to the topography of the north of Ireland?

This material is highly important as it was transcribed “in the field” at a time of great social, political and demographical change in Ireland. As such, Henry’s work located and preserved many songs and contextual information that would have otherwise been lost from the record. His methodology sought to transcribe as accurately as possible the songs of the people of his local area across a broad area of Northern Ireland without too much editorial interference. In this way, his collection gathered songs, folklore, photographs, familial and local history in a deeply authentic manner which generated considerable interest and affection not merely among his local community, but by subsequent generations of singers, musicians, broadcasters and musicologists in the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and across the globe. This was recently highlighted in Sam Henry Songs of the People, a two hour documentary and concert programme on BBC Northern Ireland (2018). Henry has been acknowledged as a major pioneer in the study of song in the British Isles and has been championed by key musicologists such as Alan Lomax and Gale Huntington. The quality of the material is highly impressive and will generate scholarship across the disciplines of literature, musicology, history, museum, media and heritage studies. It is singularly important as a window into a pivotal generation that witnessed the shift from traditional to modern forms of society amid a backdrop of the foundation and initial consolidation of the state of Northern Ireland. Henry’s songs convey the sense of how communities understood their local places and their place within them, their Geographical Imagination (Massey, 2005), through the lyrics of local song and imagined the places in which they lived. This project shall employ an interdisciplinary methodology of literary criticism with cultural geography to trace how the locales mentioned in Henry’s work constructed their sense of place through how their song described their setting place and milieu. The candidate shall be based within the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Museum Services with a six month placement at the Burns Library in Boston College, Boston. USA. There, the candidate will have access to major American archives of other Henry material, gain excellent working knowledge of Boston’s curatorial and digital centre, and disseminate their work and projects within the academic and museum sectors in the United States.

SUPERVISION AND EXTERNAL ADVISORS

First Supervisor:	Frank Ferguson	School/Department:	Arts and Humanities
Second Supervisor:	Linda Clarke	School/Department:	Education
Additional Advisor:	Helen Perry	Organisation/Institution:	Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council Museum Services

Frank Ferguson has considerable research expertise in Ulster literature, song, culture and identity. He is a leading expert on Ulster writing who has led major projects into researching, digitising and disseminating Ulster culture. He is well placed to lead the supervision of this project as he has internationally acknowledged expertise on Ulster literature and song. He is the editor of the landmark Ulster Scots Writing An Anthology (Four Courts 2008) and was the consultant for a recent BBC

television production on Sam Henry Songs of the People (BBC 2018). He is the Research Director of English Language and Literature at Ulster and the Director of the Ulster University Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies. He has led a series of major projects developing digital, exhibition and outreach materials in Irish and Scottish literature as part of the English research unit's research and impact development programme. He is Co-Investigator on the AHRC funded Representation of Jews in Irish Literature. He has supervised five successful PhDs and five successful MRES in literary studies. He has great experience in developing the professional and academic skills of PhD and Early Career researchers at Ulster through his Impact and Outreach work to the local educational and arts sectors and has created strong research networks through schools, libraries, archives, arts organisations and local media which have proved very beneficial to his PhD candidates.

Linda Clarke is a senior Educationalist and a Geographer with a keen interest in the Geographical Imagination which inhabits the intersections between place and learning. Her research is focused on teacher education and education technology and she has worked on a range of interdisciplinary curricular projects including the Ulster-Scots Education Project with Frank Ferguson that created a series of educational materials for secondary schools and the general public based on Ulster-Scots history, literary and heritage. She will bring considerable experience of the developing of cultural mapping for academic and cultural purposes.

Helen Perry has over twenty five years experience in the museum sector with a track record of building collections and engaging communities in heritage practice. Helen has been responsible for the development of Coleraine Museums collection from approx. 2000 items in 1999 to a substantive and important collection of approximately 40,000 including the prestigious Hugh Thomson collection and the Sam Henry Collection. She has been managing the Sam Henry projects to date including exhibitions, community engagement and documentation of the archive. She has also led major projects with external funding from Heritage Lottery Fund and PEACEIII 7 PEACEIV working with community groups across the Council area on projects that have explored the Decade of Centenaries and the associated sensitive and divisive histories - using the Henry archive to support reflection and discussion with audiences as part of that body of work. In addition Helen has run a number of very successful seminars for museums, heritage and community sectors and supervised third level student placements in the museum service from European and UK institutions.

RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

The project shall provide the candidate with a very strong research environment which combines a university doctorate with industry placements. The Council's Museum Service is core funded by the Council to deliver on the Cultural Services Strategy. The three pillars of the Museum Service are Collections Management, Community Engagement and public access to collections. The Service manages 5 museum collections across the Borough with over 50,000 items. It delivers substantial annual programmes in 5 Accredited(UK Standard for Museums) museum venues and delivers a programme of community engagement with groups in particular targeting Section 75. The Service reports through Head of Service Community and Culture to the governing body. A further function requires Museum Services to seek external funding to deliver enhanced and targeted programmes e.g. PEACEIV. There are currently 4 core staff including the Manager enhanced by 2 PEACEIV staff. The office is fully accessible and supported by Councils IT and Technical services teams when necessary.

The candidate will also become an integral part of the Research Unit for English Language and Literature with outputs assessed in REF2014 as over 80% internationally excellent and world leading. Researchers in the English research unit at Ulster continue to contribute significantly to the discipline: they sit on advisory boards in government and in secondary and higher education; they are members of editorial boards and referee for key publishers such as Palgrave Macmillan, OUP, Blackwell, Routledge and Ashgate; they provide invited keynote lectures and presentations at prestigious international conferences and symposia; and examine degrees and advise on programmes around the world.

The candidate will become part of the English research group and will have access to work with the Ulster Centre for Literary Biography and the Ulster University Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies. They will have access to a variety of seminars and talks and can contribute to the English seminar series.

As a researcher at Ulster they will be part of Ulster University Doctoral College, an University wide research environment for PhD researchers. Each campus has bespoke PhD hubs providing social and meeting spaces. On the Coleraine Campus it is within the School. PhD researchers engage with the annual festival and the Doctoral Forum provides a voice for PhD's.

At Faculty level there are 9 research Units, providing a rich diversity. We have collaborative agreements with the Seamus Heaney Homeplace which provides access and opportunities for PhD candidates. We work closely with the MAC Belfast, the Riverside Theatre, The Verbal Arts Centre, DerryLondonderry, the John Hewitt Summer School, Armagh and the Ulster-Scots Agency. The candidate would have the opportunity to engage as researcher with a number of programmes and bursaries which are offered by these groups. The candidate will also have an opportunity to develop their work on Henry on a placement at the Burns Library Boston College where they can explore a series of pertinent American archives, enhance their skills in archival and digital humanities and gain further industry experience with museum and research partners in the United States.