

Nottingham Trent University
D29 English Language and Literature
Impact Case Study:
Recovering Labouring-class Writing

Evidence source:
Online survey conducted by Ergo Consulting
www.ergoclear.com

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consultancy with clear direction

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Nottingham Trent University commissioned Ergo Consulting to run an independent survey to gather evidence of the impact of the Recovering Labouring Class Writing research.
- 1.2 An online questionnaire, with a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions, was prepared in Snap software and posted on the Ergo website. The survey ran for two months from August to September 2013.
- 1.3 Recruitment to the survey was via circulation to members of the John Clare Society, the Robert Bloomfield Society, the Thomas Chatterton Society and by email to approximately 125 other individuals (both academic and non-academic) now known to be actively interested in reading or writing about labouring-class poetry.
- 1.4 After data cleansing there were 68 valid responses to the survey. No questions were mandatory, so that the number of responses to each question varies.
- 1.5 In summary, the survey elicited responses that mirrored the extensive reach of the research: local, regional, national and international. The responses provide clear quantitative and qualitative evidence of a very significant and sustained impact on academics and lay readers across the world, and a major shift in public understanding and appreciation for labouring class writers.

2 Findings about the reach of the impact

- 2.1 Participants were asked which NTU sourced publications they had read or consulted. 59 respondents answered this question, with, on average, each respondent identifying more than 5 publications that they had read or consulted. Table 1 shows that the sample of respondents to the survey had read or consulted a comprehensive spread of relevant NTU publications.

Table 1: Labouring Class Writing publications read or consulted

Type of publication	No.
John Clare Information Pack (1993)	9
The Independent Spirit: John Clare and the Self-taught Tradition (1994)	34
Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry (1994)	31
The John Clare Society Journal [between 1993 and 2007, vols. 12-26]	41
John Clare: New Approaches (2000)	31
The Robert Bloomfield Society Newsletter (from 2000)	17
The Thomas Chatterton Society Newsletter (from 2002)	10
Eighteenth-Century English Labouring-class Poets, three volumes (2003)	31
Nineteenth-Century English Labouring-Class Poets, three volumes (2006)	27
Robert Bloomfield: Lyric, Class, and the Romantic Canon (2006)	21
'Labouring Class Writing', special number of Keywords 8 (2010)	18
John Clare and Community (2013)	30
Other articles, book chapters or other printed materials	14

2.2 14 respondents identified a very wide range of other publications that had had an impact upon them:

John Goodridge: 'Some Rhetorical Strategies in Later Nineteenth-Century Labouring-Class Poetry' (2005), 'Stephen Duck: The Thresher's Labour and Mary Collier, The Woman's Labour' (2006), 'Now Wenches, Listen, and Let Lovers Lie: Women's Storytelling in Bloomfield and Clare' (2003), 'The Only Privilege our Sex Enjoy: Women's Storytelling in Bloomfield and Clare' (2006), 'Clare and the Traditions of Labouring-Class Verse' (2004), 'The Electric Shepherd and the Marvellous Boy: Literary Evocations of Thomas Chatterton's Suicide' (2002).

Various articles and editions of Clare's poetry

These are all excellent publications that have been the foundation stones on which I have built my own understanding of labouring class poetry and an academic career.

Various

Many, many too numerous to name over 40 years.

Goodridge, John, 'Some Rhetorical Strategies in Later Nineteenth-Century Laboring-Class Poetry', *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, 47 (2005), 531–547 -- -, 'Stephen Duck, The Thresher's Labour, and Mary Collier, The Woman's Labour', in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. by Christine Gerrard (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 209–222 Goodridge, John, and Bridget Keegan, 'John Clare and the Traditions of Labouring-class Verse', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Literature, 1740-1830*, ed. by Thomas Keymer and Jon Mee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 280–295

Writing Emotion in Three Philip K. Dick Novels John Goodridge

Goodridge, 2005. Some Rhetorical Strategies in Late Nineteenth-Century Labouring Class Poetry. Goodrdige and Keegan 2006. 'Clare and the tradition of labouring-class verse'

Goodridge, John. 'The Deathless Wish of Climbing Higher: Robert Bloomfield on the Sugarloaf'. *Wales and the Romantic Imagination*. Eds. Damian Walford Davies and Lynda Pratt. Cardiff: U of Wales P, 2007. 161–79

John Clare and Community

Taken from bibliographies and indices by John Goodridge (and others) with particular reference to John Clare.

John Clare Biography - Jonathan Bate John Clare and the Folk Tradition - George Deacon Birds Nest - Anne Tibble John Clare: Poems of the Middle Period, 1822-1837 John Clare, Selected Poems - Joshua Essaka The Oxford Authors: John Clare - Eric Robinson and David Powell The Prose of John Clare The Shepherd's Calendar - Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield Idea of Landscape and Sense of Place 1730-1840 An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare - John Barrell The Song of the Earth - Jonathan Bate John Clare and Picturesque Landscape - Timothy Brownlow John Clare's Birds - Eric Robinson and Richard Fitter 'A Country Diary', *Guardian*, 8 Septemeber 1976 A Right to Song - Edward Storey Carry Ackroyd book 'Her Curious House is Hidden: Secrecy and Femininity of John Clare's Nest Poems' - Simon Kovesi in *John Clare Society Journal* Clare in Context - Geoffrey Summerfield, Hugh Haugton, Adam Phillips 'John Clare in Hiding: "He Hides and Sings"' - Ronald Blythe John C lare and the Place of Poetry - Mina Gorji *Studies in Scottish Literature*, Sir Walter Scott and John Clare: An Unpublished Letter - Ian D. Kane John Clare, the poet of the environmental crisis - 200 years ago - George Monbiot, *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jul/09/john-clare-poetry> No John Clare: Minute Observations from the Ulster Cottage Door - Jennifer Orr *Uncommon Ecology: Reading the Romantic Oikos* - Shalon Nicole Noble, <http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2449&context=etd> John Clare, Popularity in Authorship, *The European Magazine* - John Birtwhistle, <http://www.johnclare.info/birtwhistle.htm>

<http://www.familytreelegends.com/records/22719?c=read&page=157> - John Clare Biography John Clare Society

Volumes in the Trent Editions series

- 2.3 Participants were then asked which NTU sourced online resources they had used. 56 respondents answered this question. with, on average, each respondent identifying two online resources that they had read or consulted Table 2 shows that the responses to this question indicate widespread and diverse reach of the impact of the online resources.

Table 2: Labouring Class Writing online resources used

Type of online resource	No.
The John Clare Web Page (from 1997)	38
The Database of Labouring-class Poets / Labouring-class Poets Online	34
The Letters of Robert Bloomfield and His Circle ('Romantic Circles' 2012)	16
Robert Bloomfield: 'The Inestimable Blessing of Letters' [essays] ('Romantic Circles Praxis' series, 2012)	12
Other online articles or resources about labouring-class writers, e.g. 'Poor Clare' by John Goodridge	4

- 2.4 Participants were then asked which of a number of NTU-run meetings, talks or other events they had attended. In all, more than half the sample (n=36) had attended at least one such event. Table 3 details the range of events attended by the sample of respondents.

Table 3: Labouring Class Writing events attended by the sample of respondents

Type of online resource	No.
The Independent Spirit Conference (1994)	2
John Clare: New Approaches and New Voices conference (1998)	4
Robert Bloomfield Day (annually since 2000)	9
John Clare Forum or other Clare-related meetings	13
Talks on Clare or labouring-class writing given by NTU staff elsewhere	23

- 2.5 A third of the sample had attended talks given by NTU staff, and 22 gave specific details:

Robert Bloomfield Symposium, CECS, University of York, June, 2000: John Goodridge

'Class and the Canon Conference', University of Glasgow, April 2008

lecture by John Goodridge at Glasgow conference March 2009

I heard John Goodridge lecturing on George Crabbe in Newcastle University in 2012, and on Labouring-Class poets in Durham University in 2013.

Various other conferences and talks on Clare.

2012

Launch of 'John Clare in the Community' by John Goodridge. Presentations and readings of Clare's work.

I attended the John Clare symposium at Nottingham Trent University in 2003, which was organized by John Goodridge to celebrate the naming of the John Clare Lecture Theatre. Simon Kovesi's (then at Nottingham Trent) gave a paper on John Clare and the Politics of Egotism.

I attended a study seminar on labouring-class poetry delivered by John Goodridge at Newcastle university in 2012/13 academic year

John Goodridge, Talk at Romantic Realignments seminar, Oxford, 2013

Conferences.

Brown Bag research paper at NTU Clifton campus

John Goodridge talk at Durham University, 2013.

Richard Cronin paper on Clare and two Kovesi papers

Brown Bag research papers on Clare, Bloomfield, Chatterton and labouring class poets between 1997-2013

John Goodridge at the Crabbe's Tales Conference at the University of Newcastle and at the Open University Romantic Period Seminar, held at the University of London.

John Goodridge Inaugural Professorial lecture (forget the year) Goodridge at the Romanticism Wye Valley Conference in July 2011 Also at British Association for Romantic Studies Conferences over the years.

John Goodridge on Clare in conference on Romantic Correspondence FRIDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2005

John Goodridge speaking about his new book John Clare and Community, London university, autumn 2012

Tim Fulford on Robert Bloomfield, at the conference on 'The Wye Valley: Romantic representations, 1640-1830', 6-8 July 2011

Many talks by Prof. John Goodridge on Chatterton, Clare, and labouring-class poetry

John Goodridge has given a number of papers at BARS International conferences that I have attended.

2.6 Participants were asked whether they had engaged with NTU Labouring Class Writing Research in a number of different roles or capacities. 58 answered this question. Again, the responses as illustrated in Table 4 show the very wide reach of this impact across different areas of public and cultural life.

Table 4: Engagement with Labouring Class Writing research in different capacities

Engagement with Labouring Class Writing research as...	Number
a school teacher	1
a teacher in higher education	34
a student	19
a writer	25
an arts administrator	1
a critic	19

a member of a literary society	21
a reader not professionally involved in literature	7
in some other capacity	3

2.7 The 'other' capacities that respondents cited included the following two interesting areas of cultural impact.

I maintain a series of related web resources (i.e. blogs, etc.)

Writing music inspired by the research of NTU

2.8 Participants were asked whether they had been involved in any academic courses which included NTU labouring class research. 15 respondents between them identified a very wide range of impact through their use of this work in their teaching in Higher Education Institutions (other than the Unit of Assessment) across the world:

1990-2005 Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, USA: 18th-century literature, John Clare 2005-present, University of Kent: 1st year Romanticism and Critical Theory, in which Clare is taught every year; 2nd and 3rd yr Eighteenth-century modules in which labouring-class writers are taught every year; Goodridge's *Rural Life in Eighteenth-Century English Poetry* is a standard critical resource; MA modules in Eighteenth-Century Studies, especially core module 'Hacks, Dunces, Scribblers' in which labouring-class writers are taught every year.

Manchester Metropolitan University, 'Romanticism' courses in 2007-2008 and 2011-2012. I taught as an Associate Lecturer at this institution, where the poetry of John Clare was studied on the syllabus.

ENG 510: The Age of Wit (taught b/t 1996-2006) ENG 461: Literature in English II (1700-1900) (taught annually b/t 2006 and present) EBG 512: 18thc. Women Writers (last taught Fall 2012) All courses taught at San Francisco State University

I have regularly included Clare in courses on Romanticism and directed students attention to the various materials from NTU.

I teach Victorian literature at the University of Iowa and include working-class poems and autobiographies in all my courses.

ENGL 114, Foundations of Literary Studies

Romantic literature courses University of Wales, Swansea and Lampeter.

'English Literature 1642-1740,' taught at various Oxford colleges (incl. Wadham and Jesus, 2006-9), included optional weeks on labouring-class poetry.

MA module on authorship at University of Kent

The Romantic Period, 2002-2012, University of York

Romantic Conflicts--a year-long second year university BA hon's paper at Anglia Ruskin University.

Revolution, Romanticism and Realism. 3rd year BA compulsory core course. Gothic and the fantastic 2nd year seminar option BA course.

I used to teach Bloomfield on a Masters course and used John Goodridge's Trent Edition(s), as well as recommending NTU-sources criticism.

Several modules at the universities of Exeter, Bristol, Stanford, and Chicago 1995-present

Revolution, Romanticism and Realism. 3rd year BA compulsory core course. Gothic and the fantastic 2nd year seminar option BA course. [Swansea]

2.9 Similarly, five respondents had been involved as students in academic institutions other than the Unit of Assessment in courses which included NTU Labouring Class Writing research work:

Neoclassical literature (Creighton); Laboring-Class Poetry (Creighton); Nineteenth-Century Literature (Creighton)

An 'Optional Thesis' (i.e. undergraduate dissertation) on labouring-class poetry, University of Oxford 2001-2

MPhil student, English: Eighteenth-Century and Romantic Studies, University of Cambridge, 2008-9. PhD student, English, Queen Mary, University of London, 2010-present.

I was aided by the excellent NTU research in my PhD.

'Madness in society' - a course as part of Anthropology studies at UCL, 1991, taking John Clare as subject for an extended essay, in context of history of perception and treatment of madness.

3 Quantitative findings about the significance of the impact

- 3.1 Participants were asked about the significance of the impact of the NTU Labouring Class Writing research in a variety of ways. First, they were asked to rate how much they it had affected their understanding and appreciation of various aspects of labouring class writers.
- 3.2 Table 5 shows that more than three quarters or more of the sample said that this research had affected very much or quite a lot their general knowledge of these writers (75%). More than four fifths indicated that the research had affected very much or quite a lot their interest in (83%) and appreciation of these writers (84%), their understanding of why these writers remain important (81%), and their own desire to ‘spread the word’ about these writers (84%). Nearly two thirds said that this research had affected very much or quite a lot their own writing or studying (63%).

Table 5: Significance of the impact of Labouring Class Writing research on respondents

	Very much	Quite a lot	A little	Not at all	No response
general knowledge of these writers	50%	25%	10%	6%	9%
interest in these writers	51%	32%	1%	6%	9%
appreciation of these writers and what they achieved	46%	38%	1%	6%	9%
understanding of why these writers remain important	59%	22%	3%	6%	10%
desire and ability to ‘spread the word’ about these writers	49%	25%	9%	7%	10%
Respondents’ own writing or studying	41%	22%	22%	6%	9%

- 3.3 In addition, participants were invited to say in their own words what they understood to be the significance and depth of the impact of this work on their work and lived experience. The remainder of this summary report sets out some of the most telling responses in detail.
- 3.4 What these show is very significant impact on poets and prose writers, lay readers, education beyond the Unit of Assessment, and cultural life more generally.

4 Qualitative finding about the significance of Post-1993 Research

Impact on higher education (beyond the unit of assessment)

- 4.1 The responses provide clear evidence that this research has had very significant and sustained impact on the development of teaching courses at many UK and US universities including Manchester, Kent, Oxford, York, Wales, Iowa, Chicago, Wayne State (where Goodridge's Rural Life book is now a 'standard critical resource') and San Francisco State University.

If there is a 'centre' for work on labouring-class British writers, it is at Nottingham Trent, where over the years John Goodridge, Timothy Burke, Tim Fulford, and David Worrall have contributed so indispensably to this field. The promotion of Clare and Bloomfield through online resources as well as events, and through publications such as the multi-volume editions of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century poets and the reliably excellent John Clare Society Journal, has enriched research and teaching in the field of labouring-class poetry immeasurably. Nottingham Trent functions as a force-field of energy from which all of us engaged in the collective endeavour to make labouring-class writing better known and understood have benefited and continue to benefit.

I'm far more confident of the working-class background when developing my own historical creative writing and my research on women and theatre.

I am particularly grateful to the NTU research on Labouring-Class Writers for making available the texts of writing by men and women who had often been forgotten by the literary world. Before that I knew of some of these writers but did not know the richness of the context in which they wrote and published. The NTU project assists with the study of gender, occupation, education, locality, and other themes which can profitably be studied in the work of these writers. Over the years it has had an impact on my teaching, and on my own research on Walter Scott who himself knew several labouring-class poets and often quoted from them.

It has consolidated a personal and academic interest in the work of John Clare, in particular, and equally important, has enlarged an understanding of other labouring-class writers now associated with him. The impact of Nottingham Trent University's research in this area can scarcely be praised enough. It is in the national forefront of research in this major area.

High editorial quality of works set a standard in scholarship.

The commitment, enthusiasm, and frankly brilliant critical insight of Prof. Goodridge has been an inspiration and a model of scholarship to which I and my colleagues aspire. He has inaugurated and sustained a major field of research.

This work has helped to inform my doctoral research about canonical debates in literature. It has made me aware of the existence of an enormous range of writers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who I otherwise would not have known about. It has also made available texts of the work of these writers in scholarly editions - examples would be the poems of Robert and Nathaniel Bloomfield.

NTU sponsored publications and ongoing NTU research projects in labouring-class writing (especially the database, Labouring-Class Poets, 1700-1900) are central to my own efforts to produce scholarship in this field, and to teach the work of many laboring-class poets in my classes.

Impact on writers and scholars beyond higher education

- 4.2 Additionally, this work has had very significant impact on the reading and research of many individuals beyond higher education.

The work of these scholars was hugely important to my own research, and shaped the way I approached a significant part of a book on an C18th Welsh labouring-class writer (book written in the years 2002-2006). They gave me a context, framework and vocabulary which helped me to clarify my own thoughts. On a more personal level, I have found it a constant pleasure to read such stimulating, and passionately committed, work on writers I love, but whom I was discouraged from studying at university.

It has led to a much deeper and more complex comprehension of mass literacy with discernible impact on the shape of my research output, including appreciation of the Chartist press and literature and its origins as included in my forthcoming monograph, as well as on how I have presented that research in a broader field, including various media contributions such as for Time Team on Lincoln Jail.

As a novelist writing in some part about contemporary working-class identity, the research on labouring-class writing has given me a historical perspective that I would not otherwise have gained. I feel that this has given a greater depth to my thinking - both about the challenges faced by labouring-class writers and about recurring pre-occupations and themes, specifically ideas about place, landscape, language and belonging. An example is being able to read a twentieth-century writer such as Sid Chaplin in the context of the poet Joseph Skipsey, who lived a hundred years before; both worked as miners and wrote about the communities they came from in the north-east of England. Regarding the challenges faced by labouring-class writers (and the way Skipsey battled for an education is a good example), the work of literary excavation which some of the research involves seems very important to me in that it serves to preserve voices that have been marginalised through the centuries because of historical and contemporary social structures.

As a committee member of the Robert Bloomfield Society and editor of the Society's newsletter, as well as a writer on Bloomfield and related areas and a member of the John Clare Society, the work has been invaluable, indeed indispensable for me. It has fed and sustained my interest and deepened my knowledge in the area.

Writing music inspired by the research of NTU.

John Goodridge's research of working and labouring class writers and poets in particular helps me in my work [as a published poet] in negotiating my place in the tradition of English literature.

A student of John Clare for 40 years, since my retirement I have devoted a great deal of time to reading and re-reading much of his work and the work of Clare scholars over the past 20+ years. This has prompted me to start to work myself with the original Clare manuscripts with the renowned Clare scholar Eric Robinson. This continues...

[the work has given me] The confidence to start my own creative work

The research undertaken on labouring-class writing at NTU has been key to my understanding of the poet John Clare and the tradition to which he belonged. The knowledge I have gained from this research has allowed me to complete a PhD on the letters of John Clare and Eliza Louisa Emmerson, examining how Emmerson helped Clare develop as a published writer. Now I am investigating the role of women and patronage in the lives of labouring class poets and hope to be able to contribute myself to this important field of investigation.

Impact on lay readers and general cultural life

- 4.3 Perhaps most importantly respondents provide clear evidence that the Labouring Class Writing research project has significantly altered their whole understanding of the literary canon, and put labouring class writers back 'on the map'.

It has re-shaped the imagined literary culture

NTU website has given me a better understanding of neglected writers, particularly in their relationship to ecological issues and East Midlands history.

The researchers at NTU have ensured that labouring-class writing is always kept in view, and accorded the importance it deserves. The quality and quantity of research, the generation of edited texts and the engagement of new scholars makes the works of these writers accessible to the public at large as well as scholars and historians.

The work at NTU has introduced me to a wealth of knowledge on labouring-class writers that, quite simply, does not exist anywhere else in the world. The research team there have recovered the work of many labouring-class writers which would not otherwise be published today. Furthermore, they have provided significant advances in the growing scholarship on John Clare, a writer who is acquiring increasing importance and popularity among readers and scholars across the world.

It's helped keep Clare & Bloomfield alive both inside and outside the academy. To different degrees their place in the canon is not wholly secure and they can easily be overlooked in designing teaching modules on the Romantic period. The work at NTU has done much to help keep them in mind, and has certainly spread knowledge and understanding of their work in adult education.

The NTU research has truly put Laboring-Class writers "on the map" in terms of current understanding of English literary history. Twenty years ago, the conventional view was that there weren't too many of these writers and they were interesting only in a minor and ultimately marginal way. The efforts of the team at NTU have ensured that this is one of the "growth areas" in terms of new and innovative research in English Studies.

The annual Bloomfield day at NTU, the publication of Bloomfield's letters, and other publications on Bloomfield have all helped to raise the profile of a poet who is not read or studied today as much as he should be.

NTU research has been instrumental in my re-evaluation of the way I see Romanticism and the canon, in particular. The work of individual scholars in a recovery research context has been invaluable not only to the academic community but to the wider world.

It contributed significantly to the creation of an intellectual culture - by way of books, articles, and collections of poetry - that sparked my interest in labouring-class poetry when I was an undergraduate (c. 2000), and has sustained that interest up to the present day. My forthcoming monograph on Stephen Duck is indebted to the recovery work performed by researchers associated with Nottingham Trent, and by John Goodridge in particular.

Encountering the rich tradition of laboring-class writing has given me a much deeper appreciation of the force of poetry in daily eighteenth-century life. Goodridge and others' writings introduced me to this world of scholarship and (just as importantly) showed the connections between LC tradition and works in the canon. The research produced and generosity shown by the NTU team has had a formative effect on my scholarly development.

It has made me aware of the richness of labouring-class writing and more appreciative of views of life not usually reflected in texts studied at university.