

# NWCDTP NORTH WEST CONSORTIUM DOCTORAL TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

## COLLABORATIVE DOCTORAL AWARD (CDA) APPLICATION FORM

(October 2021 entry)

Please read the accompanying Collaborative Doctoral Award Guidance Notes before completing this application

### 1. Project Details

Name and email contact details of Primary Academic Supervisor and applicant (if a student is named in the project)	Dr Eleri Cousins e.cousins@lancaster.ac.uk
Higher Education Institution	Lancaster University
NWCDTP Pathway	Classics

### 2. Doctoral Project Title

Religious Landscapes on Hadrian's Wall: A Spatial and Diachronic Analysis



### 3. Doctoral Project Proposal (A word limit of 1500 words max, including references)

**Note: The NWCDTP reserves the right to disqualify proposals that exceed the word limit**

Applicants should provide:

Full details of the project;

A chronological breakdown for completing the doctoral award, including time to be spent at the non-HEI partner organisation and

Details of the academic impact of the CDA.

This project will explore the social function of religious landscapes in the Hadrian's Wall frontier zone of Roman Britain. By combining large-scale spatial analyses of religious activity on the Wall network as a whole with an in-depth case study of religious and ritual landscapes at the fort/settlement site of Vindolanda, it will illuminate the role of religion in the construction of community and identity on the frontier. In so doing, it will set a new standard for the deployment of spatial methods to understand the dynamics of society on Hadrian's Wall.

Research on Hadrian's Wall in recent years has transformed our understanding of the nature of military communities on the frontiers of Roman Britain. New work, spearheaded by research at the Vindolanda Trust, has placed particular emphasis on extramural and intramural interconnectivity, metaphorically demolishing the concept of the fort wall as a social and a physical barrier that divided soldier from civilian (Collins and Symonds 2013). Rather than separated into discrete units of fort and *vicus*, military sites should instead be understood as a continuous social landscape, in which weaponry was crafted in extramural areas and women lived in barracks blocks. This research has also fundamentally reshaped our very definitions of the make-up of military communities, highlighting how different groups – e.g. soldiers, veterans, women, children, local non-combatants – contributed to the formation of a diverse military-inflected frontier society.

Religion and ritual, however, remain notably underexplored and underexploited areas of investigation. To date, no in-depth analysis has been attempted of the role of religion either at a single fort/settlement or on the frontier as whole. Yet, as in other parts of the Roman world, it is likely that religious ritual permeated every aspect of life on Hadrian's Wall. An understanding of the social function of religion in military communities is thus essential for our broader understanding of the construction of society on the frontier. The aim of this project, therefore, is to reintegrate religion into the broader scholarly discourse on the Wall, and to put the consideration of religion and society at centre-stage where it belongs.

The project will start by using spatial analyses of religious landscapes on the frontier as a whole in order to illuminate the geographical dynamics of cults, deities, and religious activity throughout the Hadrian's Wall zone. The student will use published sources, supplemented where appropriate with unpublished material gathered from museum visits and site archives, to create a GIS database



of known evidence (e.g. religious inscriptions, sculpture, and temples) for religious activity at sites along the line of the Wall and at outlying forts. This dataset will then be analysed using techniques such as visibility, mobility, spatial autocorrelation, and network analysis to explore the broad shapes of religious landscapes on the frontier through both time and space, and the patterns, interconnections, and contrasts for the distribution of cults and the settings of religious ritual along the Wall. The use of spatial analysis techniques is currently an underexploited opportunity in research on the Wall, and this project will serve as an exemplar for computational archaeology's potential to illuminate frontier landscapes.

This macro-level understanding of large-scale religious landscapes and connectivity in the region will provide a geographically contextualized background to the in-depth case study of religious activity at Vindolanda. Vindolanda offers extraordinary potential as a case study for the role of religion in the communities of the frontier. It is the most extensively excavated fort and extramural settlement in the Wall network, and the Vindolanda Trust holds a leading position in archaeological research on the Wall. The nature of religious evidence from the site is exceptionally wide-ranging, including multiple extramural temples and religious spaces, a to-date-unique intramural Dolichenum, and some of our most extensive and earliest evidence for the presence of Christianity on the northern frontier. This body of material presents an unparalleled opportunity to explore the social function of religion on the frontier, informed by the following questions:

- 1) How is the evidence for religious activity distributed or focused across the site? Can spatial analyses facilitate a more nuanced or accurate understanding of religious landscapes at Vindolanda?
- 2) What activities took place in Vindolanda's identified extramural and intramural temples, and how does the archaeological record shed light on the nature of religious ritual at Vindolanda? What role does religion play in other sorts of social spaces such as streets, houses, workshops, barracks blocks, etc?
- 3) To what extent can ritual activity be correlated with different identity and community groupings, and what insight does this give into religion's role in the construction of society at Vindolanda? How does religious identity intersect with such factors as gender, ethnicity, or military status?
- 4) How does the role of religion at Vindolanda change through time, both during the Roman period and into the post-Roman period? What is the role of Christian practices at the site, particularly in the later Roman period?
- 5) Are practices at the site representative of the broader picture of the frontier as a whole or do they reflect a unique pattern based on the customs, practices and ethnicities of the communities present at Vindolanda?

By combining this detailed case study of religious and social landscapes at Vindolanda with a spatially-informed analysis of religious connections on the frontier as a whole, this project will make a major contribution to our understanding of the role of religion in the construction of frontier communities.

## Timeline

### 2021-2022

- Literature review; creation of GIS dataset; training in advanced spatial analysis; research and excavation visits to Vindolanda; draft introduction

### 2022-2023

- Definition of spatial analyses; computational exploration of GIS dataset; research and excavation visits to Vindolanda; two draft chapters; presentations at conferences

### 2023-2024

- Research visits at Vindolanda; draft final chapters and conclusion; draft article with support of supervisors aimed at an archaeological or digital humanities journal; begin planning temporary exhibition at Vindolanda Museum with support of Vindolanda Trust. Submission of thesis September 2024.

During the PhD, the student will spend up to five months based at the Vindolanda Trust, working with museum collections and gaining first-hand knowledge of the site through excavation (further details in Section 6).

## Outcomes

### For the candidate

- A high-quality PhD thesis that will yield a methodologically innovative monograph
- Opportunities to develop temporary exhibits, on-site signage, and training for site guides at a heritage site which receives over 100,000 visitors per year and whose museum is recognized by the Arts Council as a 'Designated Collection' of national and international significance
- Practical experience of archaeological fieldwork through training at a major excavation project
- Strong transferable skills and interdisciplinary training in history, archaeology, and GIS/digital humanities, offering the potential for future employment in History, Classics, and Archaeology, as well as the heritage and commercial sectors
- Papers at Lancaster University and Vindolanda Research Lecture Series, and at national and international conferences, e.g. the Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference, the *LIMES* congress, and the Computer Applications and Quantitative Methods in Archaeology Conference.
- Professional networking in the fields of Roman archaeology, heritage, and digital humanities, facilitated by the connections of both the Vindolanda Trust and LU's History Department

### For the Vindolanda Trust

- In-depth, innovative research into a vital yet under-investigated aspect of the site's history, which will inform new museum exhibits, site interpretation, and signage

- Creation of content for temporary and permanent exhibitions and signage at Vindolanda site and museum and for Vindolanda Key Stage 2 school materials; incorporation of results into training for Vindolanda's site guides
- Contribution to the Vindolanda Trust's research framework's requirement to further knowledge about the communities who used the site and to share that information with a wide and varied audience
- Placement of Vindolanda's religious finds and temples into context with the broader picture of religious activity on Hadrian's Wall
- Establishment of links with a new academic partner, Lancaster University

#### For LU History Department

- A new non-HEI partner that will expand the chronological and geographical range of the department's established commitment to partnerships with the heritage sector in the north of England
- The opportunity to recruit a talented PhD candidate on a Roman archaeology topic at a time of active expansion of Roman archaeology research in the Department
- A project that brings together the research strengths of the Department's Regional Heritage Centre, Digital Humanities Hub, and Centre for War and Diplomacy

#### For the field

- The reintegration of religion into current conversations about the nature of society and social landscapes on the frontiers of Roman Britain
- New insights into the religious dimension of the transition from Roman to post-Roman Britain, including the still-poorly-understood role of Christianity in late Roman Britain
- Application of cutting-edge techniques of spatial analysis and computational methods to understand the dynamics of life on the Roman frontier
- A significant step towards the Hadrian's Wall Research Framework's aim of a full synthesis of religious practice on the Wall (Symonds and Mason 2009: 53).

#### Bibliography

Collins, R. and M. Symonds, eds. (2013). *Breaking Down Barriers: Hadrian's Wall in the 21st century*. JRA Supplementary Series 93.

Symonds, M. and D. Mason, eds. (2009). *Frontiers of Knowledge: A Research Framework for Hadrian's Wall*. Durham County Council.

## 4. Confidential Information, Intellectual Property Rights and Ethics

Have you considered arrangements to maintain confidentiality of information and the ethical and Intellectual Property Rights issues arising between all parties? These will



have to be discussed and agreed with the non-HEI partner before the student registers onto the programme.

The Trust will retain copyright and intellectual property rights over any Vindolanda images and databases used in the project but will grant permission for images and data to be used in the PhD and any associated articles and papers. A copy of the finished PhD thesis will be lodged in the Vindolanda library.

How will you ensure that the student is made aware of any confidentiality or ethical and Intellectual Property issues and who will be responsible for agreeing procedures?

The external supervisor will be responsible for ensuring the student understands the copyright and intellectual property status of Vindolanda material used in the thesis. Procedures for use of copyrighted material and the Trust's intellectual property will align with the Trust's established protocols for external research work into its collections.

## 5. Non-HEI Partner Organisation

Organisation Name	The Vindolanda Trust
Organisational Contact Name and details of prior experience (if any) of involvement with CDAs.	Dr Andrew Birley. Dr Birley is currently supervising two CDAs with Dr Gillian Taylor of Teesside University, on 'The Chemistry of Vegetable-Tanned Leather' and 'Visualising Vindolanda: Bioimaging from field to museum'.
Details (if any) of previous academic project(s) carried out previously with this organisation.	N/A

## 6. Non-HEI Partner Organisation Involvement (750 words max)

Please give full details below of the proposed interaction with the collaborative partner, including the frequency of contact.

The Vindolanda Trust will be fully involved in the management and supervision of this project. Vindolanda's archives and collections will be a core part of the primary





dataset for the PhD. The Trust's archaeological and curatorial staff at the Vindolanda Museum will assist with access to the relevant aspects of the site archive and collections of artefacts, inscriptions, and sculpture pertaining to religion from the Trust's excavations. The Trust's team will guide the student in best-practice techniques for the use of museum collections in archaeological research.

In addition to this vital access to the material, the student will also benefit from being able to discuss this body of evidence and its archaeological contexts with the Trust's excavation team, including Dr Andrew Birley, the non-HEI supervisor, under whose aegis as Director of Excavations much of this material was uncovered. Other member of the Trust's staff, such as the Site Archaeologist, Marta Alberti and Museum Curator Barbara Birley will also assist. The specialist skills of the Trust's staff include GIS, database systems, RTI and 3D scanning, exhibition and gallery design and Roman Small Finds research and publication.

The Vindolanda Trust's work and team are connected to a broad network of other research and professionals both along the Wall and in Roman Britain and the western provinces of the Roman Empire. They will assist the student to approach other professionals and resources and groups which will be vital for the success of the project. These include other museum directors and curators along Hadrian's Wall, access to networking events and conferences for Wall-wide research, and the Roman Small Finds Group.

In addition to time spent at Vindolanda studying the collections, the student will gain additional archaeological training and first-hand experience of the site through taking part in Vindolanda's ongoing programme of excavation for up to three (non-consecutive) months over the course of the PhD. This process is important for a deeper understanding not only of the Vindolanda Trust's recording systems but also the ways in which archaeological artefacts are recovered, conserved and studied at the site. Placing the student into the landscape which s/he is studying, for several months, will allow her/him to develop a deep and personal understanding of the nature of the site and the evidence it produces as well as further developing their archaeological skill sets.

In the final stage of the project, the student will be encouraged to develop a temporary exhibition stemming from his/her research for the temporary exhibition space of the Vindolanda Museum, with the guidance of the Trust's curatorial staff. S/he will also be expected to deliver a training session on the role of religion at Vindolanda to Vindolanda's site guides, produce a blog post on the project's results for the Vindolanda website, and collaborate with the Trust on potential changes to museum and site signage on religion. These activities will give the student the opportunity to impact public understandings of life on the Roman frontier through his/her research, and provide her/him with valuable training in communicating research to public audiences through an array of media.

Please note that a contract must be signed before the student registers on the programme. Please contact the NWCDTP for guidance,  
[NWCDTP@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:NWCDTP@manchester.ac.uk)

## 7. Non-HEI Partner Financial Contribution (if applicable)

Total financial contribution (if any)	£5000 over 3 years.
Total contribution in kind	£27000

## 8. Description of Financial Contribution (750 words max)

The Vindolanda Trust will contribute the following benefits:

1) Self-catered accommodation in the Trust's Hedley Centre for a period of up to two months over 3 years for research visits outside of the site's excavation season  
Value in kind: £4000

2) Contributions towards accommodation and travel expenses to the value of £5000 over the course of the project, which may be used for the student's off-site accommodation and living expenses during excavation at Vindolanda (on-site accommodation is not available during the excavation season), as well as research visits

2) Desk and working space in the Vindolanda Museum during research visits  
Value in kind: £8,000

3). The Vindolanda Trust will provide training and assistance with the interpretation of site archives relevant to the research as well as access and supervision by the Director of Excavations and other key staff for the project. Value at £300 per day, estimated at 50 days of Vindolanda staff time during the 3 years = £15,000



## 9. Supervision Arrangements

### First Academic Supervisor

Name	Dr Eleri Cousins
Research Expertise	Dr Eleri Cousins is a Lecturer in Roman History at Lancaster University. She is a Roman archaeologist and historian whose research focuses on the role of religion in the societies of the western Roman provinces, and in particular Roman Britain. Her first book, <i>The Sanctuary at Bath in the Roman Empire</i> (Cambridge, 2020), explored the nature of religious activity at Roman Bath with a particular emphasis on landscape and on the site's role in the construction of provincial society in Britain. She has extensive experience of archaeological fieldwork and research, including at sites on the Romano-British frontier, and is a member of the Hadrian's Wall Archaeology and Research Delivery Group. Her current research projects include the development of a programme of research and fieldwork analysing religious and military landscapes at the Roman outpost fort of Bewcastle, Cumbria (in partial collaboration with the second supervisor, Dr Murrieta-Flores), and a second monograph focused on the role of religion in the Roman Alps.

### Second Academic Supervisor

Name	Dr Patricia Murrieta-Flores
Research Expertise	Dr Murrieta-Flores is the Co-director of the Digital Humanities Hub at Lancaster University and Senior Lecturer in Digital Humanities at the History Department. She is an expert in Computational Archaeology and has extensive experience in the development of innovative spatial methods for archaeological and historical research. She has ample expertise in Landscape Archaeology and Spatial Humanities, and she has published widely about the

	creation and use of computational approaches in the humanities. She has led multiple internationally funded interdisciplinary projects. She is PI of the project “Digging into Early Colonial Mexico: A large-scale computational analysis of historical sources”, and is the Executive Board Secretary of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO).
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### Non-HEI Partner Supervisor

Name	Dr Andrew Birley
Experience relevant to the collaborative project.	As Chair of the Vindolanda Research Committee, Director of Excavations at Vindolanda and a member of the Hadrian's Wall Archaeology and Research Delivery Group, the HW management board and former Chair of the Archaeological Committee for the Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, Dr Andrew Birley is superbly placed to assist the student not only with the Vindolanda case study element of this research but also with wider contacts and networks along the Frontiers of the Roman Empire, Hadrian's Wall. He has been the Director of Excavations at the site of Vindolanda for 15 years and has worked as an archaeologist on Hadrian's Wall for over 25 years. He has extensive experience in collaborative research, lecturing and publication. Dr Birley is also a Trustee of the Clayton Collection, which holds vital resources and collections pertaining to Roman religion from sites including Chesters, Carrawburgh, Housesteads, and Carvoran. His current research projects include a five year research excavation at the site of Vindolanda, leading work on the Vindolanda writing tablets, and collaborating with Leicester University's Arch-I-Scan project.

### 10. Supervision and Progression Plan

Please give details of the supervision plan agreed between the academic supervisors and the CDA non-HEI supervisor, including details on how supervision duties will be shared.



Lancaster University



Manchester Metropolitan University

RNCM  
ROYAL NORTHERN  
COLLEGE of MUSIC



UNIVERSITY OF  
LIVERPOOL

MANCHESTER  
1824



University of  
Salford  
MANCHESTER  
1967-2017 50 YEARS

Please include details of how the student would be supported if the main supervisor leaves, or is unable to continue, or the non-HEI partner organisation withdraws or is unable to continue.

Supervision at Lancaster will be split 80/20 between Dr Eleri Cousins and Dr Patricia Murrieta-Flores, in keeping with standard arrangements for dual supervision in the Department of History. Dr Andrew Birley will take an active role in guiding the student's research through both formal and informal supervisory meetings while the student is working on site at Vindolanda, and will stay in regular supervisory contact while the student is based at Lancaster. Joint supervision with the Vindolanda and Lancaster supervisors will take place on a termly basis; these meetings will be held either at Vindolanda or using video conferencing, depending on the need for on-site discussion of material. Dr Birley will also attend the student's annual progress review, either in person at Lancaster or over video conferencing.

If Dr Cousins is unable to continue with supervision, principal supervision at Lancaster will be taken over by Dr Murrieta-Flores. In this event, a secondary supervisor would be selected from the faculty of the Lancaster History department; there is sufficient expertise in regional history and Roman and post-Roman history in the department to ensure the successful completion of the project under these circumstances. If Dr Birley is unable to continue with supervision, Barbara Birley, assisted by Marta Alberti, would take over supervisory duties at the Vindolanda Trust. As the curator for the Vindolanda Trust, and a leading member of the Roman Small Finds Group, Barbara is best placed to continue to assist with the research into artefact based collections at the site. Marta Alberti, the site archaeologist, will be able to assist and supervise with context-based and GIS-based questions and methodologies. In the highly unlikely event that the Trust withdraws from the project or is unable to continue, a thesis could be successfully completed by using published site reports of the Trust's excavations, complemented with additional case study material from other sites on Hadrian's Wall.

**11. Please give details of how the student's training needs will be identified and monitored over the course of the CDA (750 words max).**

The student will undergo a formal evaluation of their training needs as part of their induction into the PhD, and then yearly thereafter as part of the established PhD review process at Lancaster University. For general training in research and writing skills, they will be directed to take modules as appropriate from the Lancaster Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Research Training Program (FASS RTP), as well as training opportunities in partnership with other universities in the North West Consortium. Teaching opportunities and training will be made available through the Lancaster History Department. More specialized training essential to the project will be provided by the History Department and the Vindolanda Trust as follows:

The acquisition of advanced GIS and spatial analysis skills will be essential to the successful completion of the proposed project, and the student's training needs in this area will be assessed at the start of the PhD, and monitored informally through supervision and formally through the PhD review process. The Lancaster History Department is world-leading in Spatial Humanities, and eminently equipped to provide the student with any necessary training. The nature of this training will depend on the selected student's levels of prior experience with GIS and spatial analysis, but may include the student auditing modules from the Department's MA in Digital Humanities, particularly the module 'HIST429: Spatial Technologies for Humanities Research' and engaging in directed study with the guidance of the second supervisor, Dr Murrieta-Flores. The student will also benefit from participation in the vibrant research cultures of the Lancaster History Department's Digital Humanities Hub, Regional Heritage Centre, and Centre for War and Diplomacy, the aims of all three of which align closely with the research agenda of this proposed CDA and serve to make the Department a natural home for the project.

The partnership with the Vindolanda Trust will provide the student with training in archaeological fieldwork and post-excavation techniques. The Vindolanda Trust in conjunction with the lead academic supervisor will work with the student to identify and provide appropriate practical archaeological training over the course of the PhD, building where possible on the student's prior experience (if any) of archaeological fieldwork, and thus developing a portfolio of practical archaeological skills to broaden the student's employability potential after the PhD.

While expert knowledge of ancient languages is not essential for successful completion of the proposed project, if the student does not already possess a working knowledge of Latin s/he will also be expected to take part in the History Department's intensive Latin classes for postgraduate students. The student will also be encouraged to develop a reading knowledge of French and German through participation in language classes run by the Department of Languages and Culture at Lancaster.

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## 12. Recruitment and Selection Process

Has a candidate already been identified who will take on the doctoral project if it is selected?

No
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If so, please provide brief details of the student's involvement in the development of the project to date and their suitability to take on the project (750 words max)

N/A
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If there is not already a candidate in mind, please outline the planned selection process to recruit a student, should this application be successful (750 words max)

An application process will be conducted following NWCDTP procedures.
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## 13. Letter of Support from the Non-HEI Partner Organisation

Please confirm that the letter is attached as the application will not be considered without this.

Points that non-HEI Partners may wish to include:

- confirmation that they agree the project;
- the relevance of the project to their organisation;
- the nature of their involvement with the project.

A letter of support from the Vindolanda Trust is attached to this application.
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## 14. Acknowledgement

I confirm that the information I have provided in this form is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge at this date. I fully understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the relevant forms are submitted to the relevant office in due time and



that any missing information may render this application incomplete and ineligible. I authorise the North West Consortium DTP to disclose to the AHRC any information that is relevant to this application.

<b>Signature:</b>	
<b>(Type Name if submitted electronically)</b>	Eleri Hopkins Cousins
<b>Date:</b>	15/10/20



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University



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UNIVERSITY OF  
LIVERPOOL

MANCHESTER  
1824



University of  
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1967 - 2017 50 YEARS