The annual Cambridge Heritage Research Symposium (CHS) was set up twenty years ago as a forum for discussing and sharing ideas, questions, and case studies arising from working with or studying heritage. In short we wanted to provide an opportunity for talking and thinking together around topical issues within the wide framework of heritage studies.

We soon learned that there were additional benefits. Chief among these are the new networks that emerged around each gathering; the opportunity of gaining glimpses into how heritage is debated within diverse fields has been immensely valuable to us as a research community. Another outcome has been the continuous challenge to our own perceptions of heritage studies are (or what they could be), and reflections on the position of this area within both academia and professional practice.

The conferences have been instrumental to recognizing the varied forms of heritage, the wide-ranging interest in the field, and the many ways heritage is being studied and practiced – confirming the centrality of this field and the many areas it contributes to.