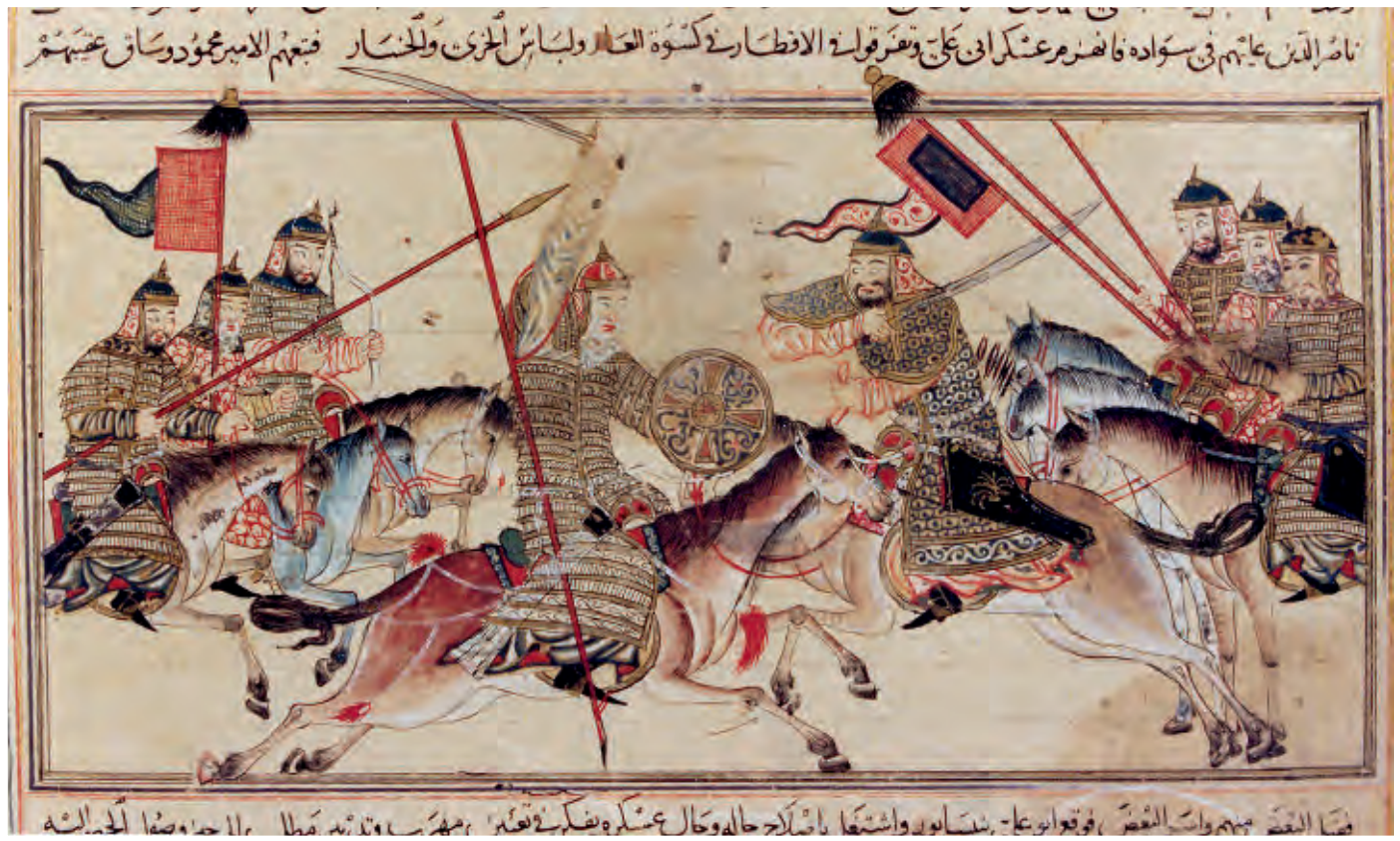


# British Academy Review · 17



## A MEDIEVAL MÊLÉE



BRITISH  
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# British Academy Review

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10–11 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH

Telephone: 020 7969 5200

Fax: 020 7969 5300

Web site: [www.britac.ac.uk](http://www.britac.ac.uk)

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This issue shows the activities of the British Academy contributing to policy and other topical issues.

There are also a range of articles with a medieval theme – drawing both on the British Academy's 'Medieval Week held in November 2010, and on the rich variety of longstanding British Academy Research Projects that produce resources for the study of medieval history.

The issue concludes with some appreciations of the value of humanities and social sciences subjects.

*Professor Ad Putter lectures during the British Academy Medieval Week, hosted by the Royal Society of Edinburgh in November 2010. A full list of the week's events, including links to the available audio recordings, can be found via [www.britac.ac.uk/events/2010](http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2010)*



# The coalition starts its white-knuckle ride

On 7 December 2010, a British Academy Forum debated the “Implications of the present coalition for British politics”. One of the participants, **Martin Kettle**, of the “Guardian”, reflects on the forces that brought together – and still hold together – the coalition government.



THE FIRST PEACETIME British coalition government since the 1930s has now been in power for six months, and the novelty has worn off. Thus Professor David Marquand FBA, addressing a British Academy Forum at the end of 2010 on the implications of the Cameron-Clegg coalition. A couple of months later, few would disagree with Professor Marquand’s remark. Yet while the novelty of the coalition has indeed worn off, as novelty does, and has probably now worn off even more than when the Forum took place, it is nevertheless worth pausing to reflect on how relatively seamlessly British politics has adjusted to the advent of a type of government which seemed to many, less than 12 months ago, to be inconceivable, undesirable and unworkable.

## Historical context

‘Single party government is the British norm,’ pronounced Sir David Butler in 1978. Few would disagree. British government in both Westminster and Whitehall is predicated on the assumption of single party peacetime rule. The collection of essays, to which Butler penned the conclusion that begins with the sentence just quoted, was titled *Coalitions in British Politics*. Even 33 years ago, and in spite of the then contemporary Lib-Lab pact between David Steel and James Callaghan, the subject of British coalitions seemed a somewhat recherché one, a fact enhanced by the portraits of Lord North and Charles James Fox alongside Steel and Callaghan on the cover.

Yet the message of the 1978 book looked forward rather than back. Single party government might be the norm, Butler went on to argue, but in fact Britain had rather more experience of coalition and minority governments than this might imply. Moreover, as Butler suggested, Britain ‘is likely to spend even more time under such rule in the future. The forces that have given the country predominantly single-party government have weakened. There has been a breakdown in the national homogeneity and the voter discipline which induced the nation to fit into a stable two-party mould. And the electoral system, which has so consistently turned minorities of votes into majorities of seats, is at least under some challenge.’

Over the following three decades, there must have been times when Butler wondered whether he had got this right. As large Conservative majority followed large Conservative majority, to be replaced in due course by large Labour majority followed by large Labour majority, single party government was not merely in rude health but also seemed stronger than ever. Four of the five ‘landslide’ single party majorities of more than 100 of the universal suffrage era (1983, 1987, 1997 and 2001) came after Butler’s 1978 remark, while only one of

them (1945) took place before it. Coalition government may have made inroads at local authority level, and in the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. At the British government level, however, coalition remained an unknown and, for most, an unwelcome possibility.

Yet, in the end, Butler may feel he has been vindicated. The Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition of 2010 arose out of a general election in which the Tories polled 36 per cent of the votes, against Labour’s 29 per cent, the Liberal Democrats 23 per cent and others 12 per cent. The parties won 306 seats, 258, 57 and 29 seats respectively in the 650-seat House of Commons. A minority government might have been possible and even, in terms of constitutional and cultural norms, probable. The political system is, after, all geared to such an outcome and, prior to May 2010, there had been little sustained planning – though there had been some – for any alternative.

## Decisive change

Yet, once the results were known, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats quickly agreed to negotiate a coalition, produced an agreement for a full term of parliament and formed a government. Even today, the decisiveness of those days is very striking. Less than two weeks after the 6 May general election, Britain acquired a fully-fledged new form of government. It was a country without maps, yet a way was found and followed. The change was major. In Philip Norton’s words, we were now to be governed, not by a party on the basis of a manifesto which had been put before the voters, but by ‘a coalition government with what amounted to a post-election manifesto, one that nobody had actually voted for.’ It was, as Norton correctly says, ‘an era of new politics.’

In retrospect, some friends and many opponents of the coalition have tried to argue that the new government was a coming together of two deeply compatible views of Britain. The core of this view of the coalition is that it was formed for a clear ideological purpose. It was formed with the overriding objective of rolling back the power of central government after years of failed Labour statism. (There is also, it should be added, a revisionist variant – more common among some liberal Tories than among Liberal Democrats – which sees the coalition as picking up the Blairite standard in public service reform policy after it had been dropped under pressure from Gordon Brown.) In this view, the coalition is a happy marriage of David Cameron’s liberal Toryism and Nick Clegg’s ‘Orange Book’ anti-state liberalism; its purpose is, first, to diminish the size and power of the



Figure 1. Lord Roger Liddle, Professor David Marquand FBA, and Baroness Shirley Williams, at the British Academy Forum on 7 December 2010.

central state in everything from public spending to civil liberties; and, second, to empower the individual, the local and the mutual in order to reinvigorate citizenship and communities.

It would be foolish to dismiss this view of the coalition altogether, not least because, as the government has gradually bedded in, many of its members, from both parties, have settled on this, *ex post facto*, as a comfortable explanation for the situation in which they find themselves. The coalition's critics often take this view too, however. They argue that the speed and depth of the government's public spending cuts, which are embodied in what is thus far its defining public act, the spending review announced by George Osborne in October 2010, prove the point. The Labour leader Ed Miliband is one such. As he put it in February 2011, the 'ideological heart' of the government is that its Big Society rhetoric is a cloak to conceal its determination in favour of a small state.

Yet this view is open to several objections. One important one is that government ministers still go out of their way to insist that the spending cuts are 'cuts of necessity' rather than 'cuts of choice'. Ministers also continue to say that their fiscal policies will, in the end, return the public spending share of GDP to what it was in around 2007-8, before the financial crash and recession. A further, more subtle and (for many) counter-intuitive criticism, is that there is a sharp ideological divide between Osborne and Clegg on the one hand, both of whom can be characterised as free-market liberals, and Cameron on the other, whose Big Society, far from being a cloak for cuts, is the expression of a kind of anti-statist socialism.

### Practical politics

As so often in politics, though, the formation and continuation of the coalition owe at least as much to practical rather than ideological factors. One of these was surely the extremely effective way in which the civil service, led by the cabinet secretary Sir Gus O'Donnell, was able to facilitate the formation of what was, in reality, the only viable coalition emerging from the election result. O'Donnell's firmness in insisting that the markets would require the formation of a solidly-based government, not least in order to avoid the kind of sovereign debt crisis then destroying the Greek government, was clearly decisive in many minds. Was the warning true? Observers and

participants are divided. Was it believed? Undoubtedly. But it had little to do with ideology.

In his excellent assessment,<sup>1</sup> Philip Norton argues that objectives of policy (which is the practical embodiment of ideology) played relatively little part in the formation of the coalition. The Liberal Democrats did not have to enter government to be able to influence public policy in the new parliament; after all, they held the balance of power. Moreover, some 70% of Liberal Democrats identified themselves as being on the left, a factor which argues against a coalition with the Conservatives and in favour of one with Labour. For the Conservatives, on the other hand, minority government offered in many ways a clearer ideological or policy path than the compromises implicit in coalition.

In the end, the coalition owes much more to political and personal factors than it does to policy or ideology. The Conservatives wanted a coalition because it offered the prospect of office after a long period in opposition and the possibility of securing their economic programme; the spending review would surely have been more constrained if it had been put forward by a minority government, and might even (though unlikely) have been defeated in the Commons. A few around Cameron, and perhaps even Cameron himself, also thought that a coalition would provide a way of marginalising the influence of the party right. The Liberal Democrats, meanwhile, were simply faced with the prospect of power. They had to say yes to a coalition of some sort. To have said no would have been treated as proof that the party was not serious. The fact that Cameron and Clegg got on together more easily than either of them got on with Brown clinched the deal.

Even today, novelty or no, these political considerations still explain at least as much about the coalition as ideology can do. The coalition is held together by common interests in its own survival, much as it was when it was formed. For the Liberal Democrats, the overriding interest is in proving that coalitions work. If the coalition collapses, the claim of the Lib Dems to be a party of government is negated. For the Tories, the overriding interest is to retain power at the next election. Given the unpopularity of the government's fiscal policies – whether imposed by choice or necessity – the Conservatives must rely on time and recovery healing their current wounds. Like the

Tories, Labour still tends to think in majoritarian terms, but Miliband appears to recognise that, when an election comes, he needs to be ready for another hung parliament and be better prepared for it than Brown was in 2010. Many psephologists believe he has little option.

A minister to whom I spoke recently came up with a good metaphor. He compared the coalition to an aeroplane. Last May the plane hurtled down a potholed runway in heavy fog. To the surprise of the passengers and crew it got airborne. Today, as all those on board knew would certainly happen eventually, the plane has run into turbulent weather. Most of the passengers are good travellers, ready for anything. Others are nervous about the bumpiness, but are prepared for the white-knuckle ride. Some, having accepted in theory that it would be a rough ride, are nevertheless shocked and frightened by the violence when the plane hits an air pocket. A few on board don't want to be there at all. The flight is a long one and it is possible that the plane will crash. But the overwhelming common

interest of those on board is for the plane to land as safely as it took off. As indeed, the minister comforts himself, most planes do. Whether it lands where and when it wants to are, however, other matters.

#### Note

- 1 Philip Norton, 'The Politics of Coalition', in *Britain at the Polls 2010*, ed. Nicholas Allen and John Bartle.

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The British Academy Forum on 'Implications of the present coalition for British politics' was held on 7 December 2010. It was chaired by Professor Anthony King FBA, and Professor David Marquand FBA opened the discussion. A full list of participants and the text of Professor Marquand's advance briefing note may be found at [www.britac.ac.uk/policy/coalition.cfm](http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/coalition.cfm)

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# THE RECESSION AND STRESS AT WORK

**Professor Tarani Chandola**, the author of a recent *British Academy Policy Centre* report, describes how stress at work has increased during the recession.

'SUSTAINABLE JOB GROWTH' is a motto for many governments, especially in the aftermath of a recession. The problem of 'job quality' is less often addressed and may be seen as hindering job growth. The sentiment 'any job is better than no job' may resonate with governments as well as people, especially in the context of high unemployment. However, if the balance between improving the quality of existing jobs and creating new jobs becomes greatly imbalanced towards the latter, this could increase work stress among current and future workers, which in turn has health, economic and social costs. A recent *British Academy Policy Centre Report on Stress at Work* highlights these concerns, and describes the context, determinants and consequences of work-related stress in Britain.<sup>1</sup>

## Trends in work stress

The 2008-09 recession has already resulted in increased levels of psychosocial work stressors in Britain. There has been an increase in job insecurity, work intensity and bullying at work. Job insecurity among public sector workers has doubled since 2009. Public sector workers also report a greater increase in (and higher levels of) work intensity, work conflicts, bullying by managers, and work hours compared to private sector workers – who also report an increase in work-related stressors. With cuts in government spending in the 2010 Spending Review primarily affecting public sector employment, levels of work stress could increase even more among workers in this sector.

Any estimated cost savings from planned cuts in government spending need to be balanced against the economic costs of work stress.

Even before the onset of the last recession, work stressors had been increasing in Britain since 1992, although this increase has become particularly marked after 2009. Furthermore, the increase in work stressors is greater among female employees who report a tripling of 'job strain' between 1992 and 2006, compared to a 50 per cent increase among male employees over the same time period.

Favourable trends in flexible work arrangements allowing for greater work-life balance appear to have been reversed by the recession. Employees report greater dissatisfaction with their work-life balance, greater dissatisfaction with their organisation's support in helping them achieve this balance, and increased work hours since 2009.

## The consequences of work stress

Repeated experiences of work stressors have physical, physiological and mental health consequences. Reviews of studies suggest strong links with anxiety disorders, and moderate links with workplace injuries, accidents and cardiovascular risk. When work stress impacts on the health and well-being of employees, sickness absence could also increase. There is strong evidence linking work stress to higher sickness absence levels. Higher levels of ill-health and sickness absence have economic consequences for employees, employers and wider society. The economic costs of work stress to society have been estimated to lie between 0.5 and 1.2 per cent of UK GDP. The costs to employers are much smaller than the costs to individuals and to society. As individuals and wider society bear a larger proportion of the economic



Figure 1. The 'Stress at Work' report was launched at the British Academy on 29 October 2010. Left to right: Brendan Barber, TUC General Secretary; Professor Sir Michael Marmot FBA; Professor Tarani Chandola, the report's author; Professor Duncan Gallie FBA, who chaired the report's steering group. Photo: Matt Crossick.

costs of work stress, there may be less economic incentives for employers to reduce work stress.

### The legal context

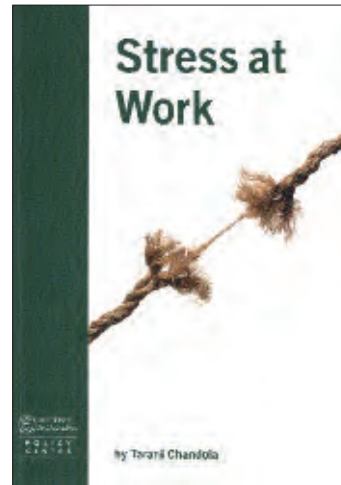
There is no legislation in the UK specifically on work stress. There is a voluntary approved code of practice (the Health and Safety Management Standards), which is meant to guide employers in matters of work stress. However, since the Management Standards came into being in 2004, there has been little decline in work stressors in Britain.

It is difficult for work stress claims to succeed, partly because courts may be reluctant to attribute the cause of someone's psychological injury to work-related factors. To certify sickness absence leave, 'fit notes' have been introduced (replacing 'sick notes'), and now include comments by health care professionals for workplace alterations to facilitate return to work. These notes would require additional training for health care professionals on suggesting appropriate interventions for patients with work stress. However, these fit notes are not legally binding and employers may choose to disregard such suggestions.

Lord Young's recent review of Health and Safety in the UK does not mention the word 'stress'. Employee well-being is only mentioned in the context of office work, which was designated as a low-hazard workplace. However, according to the Health and Safety Executive's own statistics, stress is the second most commonly reported type of work-related illness (after musculoskeletal disorders). Moreover, the experience of work-related stress is not restricted to office

environments and is commonly reported in service, manufacturing and construction industries.

Lord Young's review proposes replacing complicated procedures for risk assessment in office environments (including employee well-being) with a short risk assessment form by managers. This is at odds with standard methods of measuring work stressors (including the Health and Safety's own Management Standards) through employee surveys. The future of policies to deal with work stress appears to be in doubt, just as levels of work stress are increasing in the workforce.



### Note

- 1 All figures quoted in the article above are taken from the British Academy Policy Centre report, *Stress at Work* by Tarani Chandola.

Tarani Chandola is Professor of Medical Sociology in the University of Manchester.

*Stress at Work* is available to download via [www.britac.ac.uk/policy](http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy)

## Britain, Germany and Social Europe, 1973–2020

*In the inaugural Anglo-German Foundation Lecture delivered at the British Academy on 25 January 2011, Sir Tony Atkinson FBA considered the evolution of social policy in Europe, and its impact on inequality, poverty, social exclusion and well-being. In the following extract, he discusses the development of new means to assess well-being in the future.*

### Significance of the EU social agenda

Is the European Union social agenda just 'cheap talk', with no action? Was it the case that Member States signed up to the Social Inclusion objective at the 2000 Lisbon Summit but had no intention of adapting their policies? My answer is 'no' – for at least three reasons.

The first reason is that talk itself is important. One has only to consider the change that has taken place with regard to the political debate about poverty. The UK and Germany opposed the 1993 *Poverty 4* proposal for a fourth medium-term action programme to combat exclusion and promote solidarity. There was at the time widespread denial of the existence of poverty. In 1983, Mrs Thatcher stated in the House of Commons that 'there is no definition of the poverty line – and there has never been under any Government.' Mr Cameron could not say the same today. Not only did the Labour Government under both Mr Blair and Mr Brown adopt a high-profile commitment to end child poverty, but at the March 2010 European Council the UK government has signed up to the headline targets of the new Europe 2020 Agenda (Figure 1).

The second reason is that the social indicators adopted as part of the Lisbon Agenda, and now forming part of the Headline targets,

**"The Union has set five ambitious objectives - on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy. Each Member State will adopt its own national targets in each of these areas. Concrete actions at EU and national levels will underpin the strategy."**

- **Employment: 75% of 20-64 year-olds to be employed;**
- **Innovation: 3% of Europe's GDP to be invested in R+D/Innovation;**
- **Climate change/energy: greenhouse gas emissions 20% lower than 1990; 20% of energy from renewables; 20% increase in energy efficiency;**
- **Education: reduce school drop-out rates below 10% and at least 40% of 30-34 year-olds with completed third level education;**
- **Poverty and social exclusion: at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion.**

Figure 1. *The Europe 2020 Agenda.*

**French-German report reached three main conclusions:**

- Maintaining and increasing well-being is inseparable from economic performance measured by GDP, but this indicator can be improved;
- It is not possible to measure well-being by a single indicator;
- Well-being depends not only on the current situation but also has to be sustainable.

**The report proposes a scheme of 25 indicators:**

- Economic performance and material well-being (6)
- Quality of life (7)
- Sustainability (12)

Figure 2. Franco-German report on ‘Evaluating economic performance, well-being, and sustainability’.

represent an important shift from a focus on policies and instruments to a focus on outcomes. In the report prepared by Bea Cantillon, Eric Marlier, Brian Nolan and myself that provided the basis for the EU social indicators, we stressed that the indicators should be concerned with outputs rather than inputs. The indicators should not be measures of benefit generosity or of levels of social spending. In this respect, there is a parallel with the move in the construction of national accounts to measuring the contribution of the government sector in terms of its outputs, not, as had been the case in the past, on the basis of the assumption that inputs generated commensurate outputs. In the EU policy-making context, the shift towards a focus on outcomes was essential to make sense of the principle of subsidiarity. Member States agree on the EU objectives, but are free to determine the methods by which the objectives are realised.

The third reason is that the EU social inclusion process, and the structural indicators as a whole, represented a major step towards the agenda now referred to as ‘Beyond GDP’, or the growing acceptance that economic, social and environmental performance should be judged on a broader range of criteria than simply Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The limitations of GDP have long been recognised – indeed they were recognised by those, such as Sir Richard Stone, who created modern national accounts – but there is gathering momentum behind calls for new and broader measures of well-being. The OECD has led the way with a global project on *Measuring the progress of societies* initiated in 2004. A French Government ‘Commission on the measurement of economic performance and social progress’, established in 2008 by President Sarkozy and chaired by Joseph Stiglitz, has reported calling for better statistical tools. The European Commission has taken up the subject in its 2009 Communication *GDP and beyond*.

The political salience of these developments in the UK and Germany are illustrated by two events shortly before Christmas. On 25 November 2010, Mr Cameron announced that he was asking the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to develop new statistics to measure our progress as a country not just by how our economy is

growing, but by how our lives are improving, not just by our standard of living, but by our quality of life. Two weeks later, Chancellor Merkel and President Sarkozy met to discuss a report on *Evaluating economic performance, well-being, and sustainability* prepared by the Conseil d’Analyse Economique (French Council for Economic Analysis) and the Sachverständigenrat (the German Council of Economic Experts).

The Franco-German report is a significant attempt to take further the work of the Stiglitz Commission, and to provide a roadmap that may be useful also in the UK, as the ONS develops its work in this area – see Figure 2. At the same time, it raises a number of questions, including the following:

- How far will it break new ground?
- What difference will it make?

	Aggregate	Distribution
Income	NATIONAL INCOME	Inequality-adjusted national income
Multiple non-income domains	Human Development Index (HDI)	Inequality-adjusted HDI

Figure 3. Measuring beyond national income.

**Measurements beyond national income**

In seeking to answer – at least briefly – these questions, we need to have in mind that there are three distinct ingredients. That is, we are moving beyond national income (top left-hand box in Figure 3) in three distinct ways, ways that need to be kept separate. The first is the consideration of other domains apart from material circumstances: for example, health status or level of education or degree of social contact or sense of security. This can be measured at a purely aggregate level, which would correspond to the bottom left hand box. But there is a second ingredient. People criticise national income for being unconcerned about the distribution of that income. The second wing of the programme is therefore shown by the right-hand column: the distribution of national income, or the distribution of health status or of education etc.

The third ingredient, not shown, is concerned with sustainability: whether the current levels can be maintained into the future. In what follows, I am going to concentrate on the first two ingredients – though this does not imply any downplaying of the sustainability issue.

The simple point I want to make is that we are already in a position to say something about the contents of these boxes.

The idea that we should supplement GDP by consideration of other domains – that is move downwards in Figure 3 – has long been championed by the UN Development Programme in the form of the Human Development Index (HDI), which has just celebrated its 20th

anniversary. The HDI is important both for broadening the approach to the evaluation of development and for having a theoretical foundation in the concept of capabilities advanced by Amartya Sen. Just as national accounts have a theoretical basis in classical welfare economics, so too it is possible to ground the addition of new domains in the theory of capabilities, interpreted as the freedom people have to function in key dimensions.

A theoretical foundation can also be provided for the move to the right-hand column. National income treats £1 as being equally valued regardless of who receives it. £1 extra for an Oxford professor is weighted the same as £1 extra for a person on the minimum wage. These implicit weights can however be replaced by distributional weights that reflect concerns with the current inequality of incomes. There are of course many different possible sets of weights, as has been much discussed in the literature on inequality measurement. Again, this is far from a new suggestion. It is indeed worth remembering that the National Income Blue Book used to publish regularly information, alongside the national accounts, on the distribution of income. This table was dropped in 1983, just as inequality began to rise.

A recent development, however, has been the fourth box. In its 20th anniversary report in November 2010, the Human Development Report introduced a new form of the HDI that took account both of new domains and of distribution. For each of the domains – income, education and health – the indicators are distributionally-adjusted.

### Comparing the UK and Germany

These are not therefore empty boxes. What is more, we can go some way towards answering the question – what difference would it make if we adopted these alternative measures of well-being?

Suppose that we begin with the top left-hand box. Figure 4 shows the growth of GDP per capita in the UK and Germany, adjusted for purchasing power, in index number form. The series starts from 100 in 1973 and shows the change from that date. So that a figure of 200 means that incomes per head had doubled in terms of purchasing power. (In fact GDP per head in the UK was some 1½ per cent higher in absolute terms in 1973.) The rather surprising outcome is that the

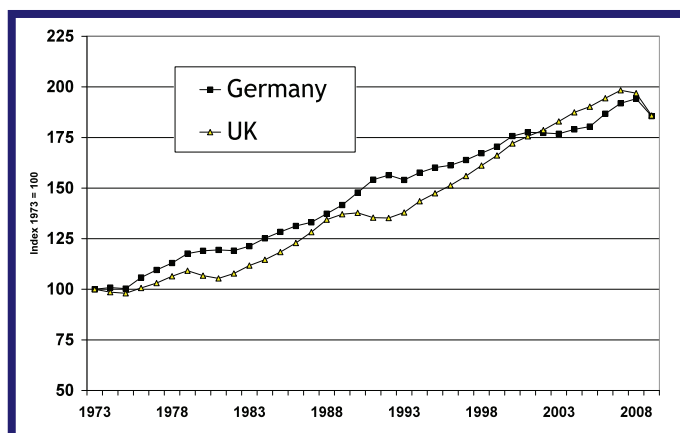


Figure 4. GDP per capita at constant PPS, in Germany and the UK. Source: OECD StatExtracts, National Income, Main Aggregates, downloaded January 2011.

two series not only start but also finish at the same value: an 86 per cent increase. Over the period as a whole, the two countries have grown at the same rate. Given what has happened over this period, including German reunification, this is rather surprising. Much has been made of the mediocre growth of the German economy since 1990. It was in fact, as they say in football, a game of two halves. For the first part of the period growth was faster in Germany; in the second part the UK caught up. But it seems to me that the mediocrity of the German growth performance is exaggerated. After all, even allowing for the downturn in 2009, GDP per capita had risen by a fifth since reunification.

But aggregate living standards are not everything. What about the other boxes, where we take alternative views about well-being? We have seen that poverty increased in Germany in recent years. What happens if we look, not at GDP per capita, but at distributionally adjusted GDP per capita?

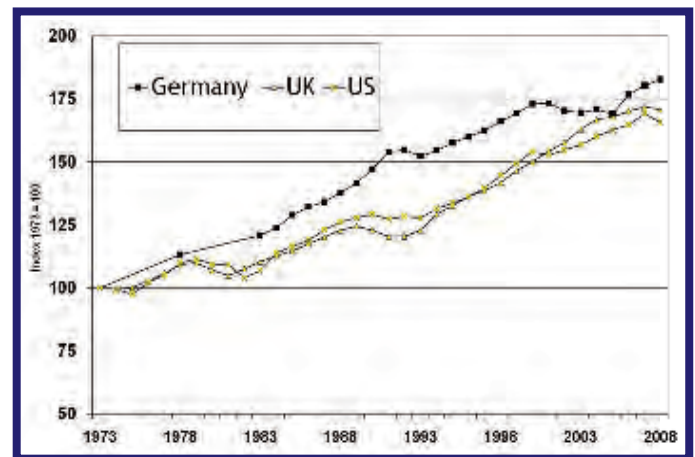


Figure 5. Inequality-adjusted GDP per head (based on Gini coefficient), in Germany, the UK and the USA. Source: GDP from Figure 4; Gini coefficients from A.B. Atkinson and S. Morelli, 'Chartbook of Economic Inequality: 25 Countries 1911-2010' (Institute for Economic Modelling, University of Oxford).

In Figure 5, I have taken a particular set of distributional weights, where a person's income is weighted according to their rank in the distribution, as in the Gini coefficient. People who rank near the top get relatively little weight; people near the bottom get a large weight. It may be seen that this changes the relative evaluations of economic performance by Germany and the UK (and I have added the US). The rise in inequality in the UK (and the US) in the 1980s meant that we fell increasingly behind in terms of distributionally-adjusted income. A gap of 7 per cent in GDP per capita by 1990 became a gap of 20 per cent when account is taken of the worsening inequality. Again though, it was a game of two halves. In recent years, inequality has increased in Germany, and the final score leaves Germany only ahead by 7 per cent in 2008. But it is still ahead, not level pegging as with GDP.

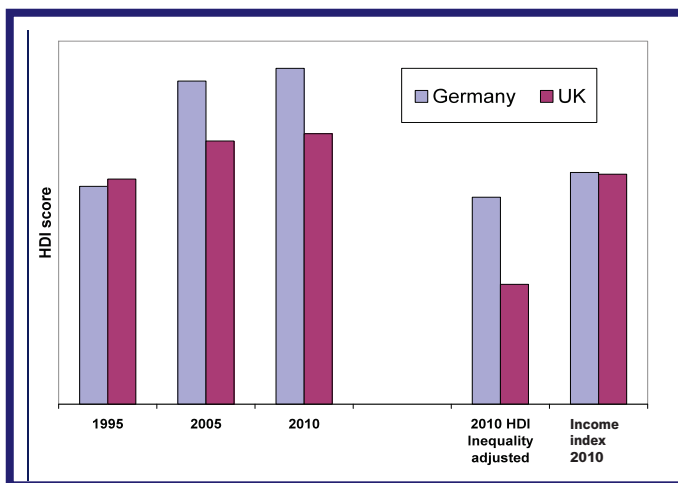
What happens if we consider other non-income domains? In Figure 6, I show the new HDI published in November 2010, which combines GDP per capita with health, measured in terms of life expectancy, and knowledge, measured by mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling. Attention is usually focused on

developing countries, but it is also interesting to see the outcome for rich countries. As you can see, in 1995 the UK had a slightly higher HDI score than Germany, but this century Germany has pulled ahead. And this becomes even more pronounced when the different components are adjusted for inequality. The two countries, similar in terms of GDP per capita, are a long way apart when we consider the inequality-adjusted HDI.

The short answer is that how we measure well-being does make a difference. Mr Cameron's request to the ONS may well lead us to take a different view of ourselves; and it may differ in ways that he does not expect.

### Office for National Statistics

Before leaving the figures, I should end with a reminder. Neither the analysis in this Lecture nor the construction of the EU social



indicators would have been possible without the major developments in official statistics over the past four decades. These include

- Annual household surveys of incomes and employment
- Harmonised across countries: EU-SILC
- Official analyses: Households Below Average Income, and Redistribution of Income.

I mention this, since the ONS is currently reviewing its priorities in the light of budget cuts. It would be ironic if we were to lose the statistics at just the time when governments and the EU are making increased demands for tools to evaluate social and economic performance.

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Sir Tony Atkinson is Centennial Professor at the London School of Economics, Fellow of Nuffield College, Oxford, and a Fellow of the British Academy.

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The Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society was established in 1973, by an agreement between the British and German governments. When the Foundation closed in 2009 on the expiry of its Royal Charter, its Trustees made available to the British Academy funds to establish a lecture series to commemorate and continue the work of the Foundation. Further information about the Anglo-German Foundation and about its publications can be found via [www.agf.org.uk](http://www.agf.org.uk)

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Figure 6. Germany and the UK according to new Human Development Index. Source: Human Development Report 2010, Tables 1, 2 and 3.

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## Social mobility: drivers and policy responses revisited

*In December 2010, a British Academy Forum reviewed the drivers of social mobility and policy programmes to enhance it. Professor Anthony Heath FBA and Dr Anna Zimdars reflect on what we have learned and what we still do not know.*

SOCIAL MOBILITY has enjoyed considerable attention under the previous Labour government which oversaw the Panel for Fair Access to the Professions and a whitepaper on social mobility in Britain among other initiatives. The new Coalition Government has also signalled its commitment to the

social mobility agenda and prioritises the development of a cross-government social mobility strategy. It thus seemed timely for a British Academy Forum, put together in consultation with relevant government officials, to consider what we have learned about social mobility in contemporary Britain, the challenges faced in achieving it, and policies that might foster mobility. The Forum, held on 14 December 2010, was attended by representatives from the civil service and academic worlds and from the Institute for Government. It was chaired by Professor Anthony Heath.

### Conceptual issues

Social mobility is about how sons' and daughters' positions in the occupational structure compare with their parents' positions (inter-generational mobility) or how one's own career moves up or down the structure (intra-generational mobility). One key question has been whether such movements have de- or increased over the past few decades. This question has, perhaps surprisingly, been difficult to answer. This difficulty has partly to do with data availability, but answers to the question also depend on the academic discipline of the

respondent. Entry into the salariat, the preferred mobility measure of sociologists, may have increased in Britain. However, entry into the top income percentiles, the upward mobility measure used by economists, has been declining. Second, ups and downs in the macro-economy impact on net rates of social mobility. In prosperous times of economic expansion, there is more 'room at the top'. As the cake gets bigger, more people are upwardly mobile. But this might still hide the persistence of relative inequalities in the chances of individuals from different origins to improve their position.

These conceptual issues not only highlight some of the challenges of providing an evidence-base for actual social mobility rates, but they also indicate the particular timeliness of discussing social mobility in a time of an unprecedented rolling back of salariat employment in the public sector. If the room at the top is shrinking, more individuals will be chasing fewer desirable jobs. In particular, access to elite positions might become more self-reproducing in tougher economic times. The Panel on Fair Access to the Professions highlighted the importance of e.g. unpaid internships which both advantage the already advantaged and help entry into professional jobs. Similarly, cycles of deprivation might be more likely to continue in times when there is less room to move upwards out of poverty.

### Policy responses

There was agreement among Forum participants that governments have tools available to facilitate greater social mobility, even in times when the room at the top might be shrinking. However, not all previously tried policies or currently proposed ones were judged equally likely to deliver on their intended target.

Interventions are broadly focused on four main stages: the antenatal/early-years period; the primary- and secondary-school period; the post-16/into-work period; and finally adulthood and progression into and within the labour market. There was some agreement that returns to investments were greatest at the earliest stages. The potential discontinuation of Sure Start and the confirmed discontinuation of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA),

at least in their present forms, was viewed with regret. In particular, the EMA had improved continuation rates in schooling (although not qualification levels) whereas the evidence for the success of Sure Start has so far been more mixed. In contrast, some new government policies such as the pupil premium were regarded as being unlikely to turbo-charge social mobility based on the experience of other European countries such as France with similar schemes.

There was also some concern that the focus had shifted too completely towards the early years without the development of a strategy for social mobility later in life, for example through the support of life-long learning and adult education. Furthermore, focus on improving educational opportunities without a simultaneous focus on the labour market might not achieve great mobility for certain groups. This is because educational attainment does not always translate into equal labour-market outcomes. The gains of women and some ethnic minority groups in terms of educational attainment have not been followed by those groups surpassing their male, white peers in the competition for the most desirable jobs or most senior positions. Here, selection processes should be further improved, perhaps through increasing the diversity of selection panels or lawful positive action.

### Asking the right questions

The Forum also critically questioned whether focusing the mobility debate solely on individual opportunities and policies to promote them fell short of tackling a more radical, and at least equally important question: the question about the equalisation of resources. Contributors argued with examples from the fields of both health and education that increasing social mobility might need more radical thinking. Finland, a country with excellent educational performance results according to the latest student assessment from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) enjoys not only far greater social mobility than the UK but it also enjoys far smaller differences between the rich and the poor. The cultural homogeneity of shared values across social groups as well as social mixing in schools in Finland might further aid social mobility. In contrast, the segregated

schooling system in the UK with disadvantaged children concentrated together in poor neighbourhoods served by 'failing' schools was viewed as likely to inhibit opportunities for these children.

With regards to health outcomes, it was noted that just changing the profile of, for example, the very disadvantaged, would not improve social inequalities in health. If person B becomes the one with rotten health instead of person A – a zero-sum change of who is up and who is down – this would not leave us healthier overall. A similar logic could be applied to the observation that Britain continues to have the highest teenage-pregnancy rates in Europe. The policy aim is to reduce this statistic, and not just change who it is who becomes pregnant. The implication is that structural change (for example, increasing the number of salaried employees or reducing the overall number of teenage pregnancies), not individual social mobility or change in the characteristics of who is most likely to become a teenage mother, is what is needed.

A final observation about structural change concerned the hollowing-out of the middle. There was concern that instead of a narrowing of the gap between the rich and the poor, many jobs were disappearing from the middle, in particular many semi-routine jobs that have been replaced by computers. This hollowing-out of the middle is resulting in greater polarisation and increase of inequality. While a perhaps obvious response would be increasing skill levels in order to move people into the high-skill, high-pay part of the labour market, there was concern whether this argument had been lost in current debates focusing around who should pay what for a university education.

### Whose responsibility is it?

This observation segues into a final theme that emerged in the discussion: whose responsibility is social mobility? There was a feeling among government representatives that the state was not the most appropriate actor to change things like parenting in the UK. Maybe the state should focus on its 'core business' rather than expanding into new and more intrusive roles. This sentiment was echoed in work undertaken by the Institute of Government where research on policy successes over the last 20 to 30 years showed

that successful policies shared the key characteristics of inclusiveness in their outreach. The complexity of increasing social mobility might thus be most fruitfully addressed when combining the efforts of the many groups and individuals who can potentially influence mobility: parents, teachers, careers' advisors, selection panels at universities, selectors for jobs, and government policies ranging from the early years to maternity leave policies and positive action but also more far-reaching policies addressing the growing gap between the rich and the poor.

### Some final reflections

Promoting social mobility in society cannot be expected to be easy, especially in the absence of sustained economic growth and increasing 'room at the top'. In a situation of zero growth, increased upwards mobility is inevitably going to involve increased downwards mobility too. Policies that

increase the chances of downwards mobility for their children are likely to be unpopular among the middle classes, and middle-class parents and families must be expected to look for ways to outwit such policies. This does not mean that policy-makers should give up the struggle to increase rates of mobility. But they should perhaps anticipate a long-haul struggle and a continually evolving social mobility strategy.

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Anthony Heath is a professor at the Universities of Manchester and Oxford, and a Fellow of the British Academy. He has written extensively on social mobility in Britain and is currently working, with Yaojun Li (ISC, Manchester University) on the social mobility of ethnic minorities. Most recently he published 'How fair is the route to the top? Perceptions of social mobility', in *British Social Attitudes: Exploring Labour's Legacy*, ed. Alison Park *et al.* (Sage, 2010).

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Dr Anna Zimdars is a lecturer at King's College London. She has worked on equal opportunities in access to elite higher education through work on admission to the University of Oxford. Most recently, she has studied entry into elite professions with a particular focus on the English legal Bar.

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British Academy Forums offer a neutral setting for argument based on research and evidence, to help frame the terms of public debates and clarify policy options. They provide opportunities for frank, informed debate. It should not be assumed that any summary record of a Forum discussion reflects the views of every participant.

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Further information about British Academy Forums can be found via [www.britac.ac.uk/policy/BA-Forums.cfm](http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy/BA-Forums.cfm)

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## Conflict resolution and reconciliation: An Irish perspective

*On 31 January 2011, the British Academy hosted a panel discussion on 'Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation'. Dáithí O'Ceallaigh, former Ambassador of Ireland to London, was one of the civil servants, from both Britain and Ireland, who worked over a period of more than 30 years to resolve the conflict in Northern Ireland. He drew on his personal experience to offer some general conclusions.*

**T**HE CONFLICT THAT broke out in Northern Ireland in 1969 was but the latest episode in a sectarian, inter-communal strife that, in reality, had lasted from the beginning of the 17th century. It had to do with religion but, most importantly, it had to do with how people saw themselves. The Unionists saw themselves as British and wished to remain part of the United Kingdom. The Nationalists, who made up about a third of the population, saw themselves as Irish who wished to be with the southern part of the island.

When the island was divided in 1921, it was done so on a sectarian headcount to ensure that, in Northern Ireland, there would always be a majority of Unionists. One Northern Ireland prime minister referred to it as 'a protestant state for a protestant people', and the result was serious discrimination against the one-third minority, which eventually exploded in 1969.

### North/south, London/Dublin

Northern Ireland should not be seen in isolation. There are two other aspects: one is the relationship between Northern Ireland and the south; the other, the relationship between London and Dublin.

From 1921, certainly until the mid 1960s, in the south we fed on a diet of anti-partitionist rhetoric. We continually emphasised that the only way to resolve the problem was unity, but no attempt was made by any government in the south to learn or understand what either community in Northern Ireland felt.

The relationship between London and Dublin, quite frankly, was poisonous. I served in the Irish embassy in London from 1977 to 1982 dealing with the British press and political parties. I was here at the time of the murders of Lord Mountbatten and Airey Neave, both of them by Irish Republicans; the hunger strikes; and perhaps the issue that caused the most difficulty between the two governments – the Falklands, when my

government, which at that time was on the Security Council, worked for a UN solution to resolve the differences between Mrs Thatcher and the Argentine government.

### Garret FitzGerald

When I returned to Ireland in late 1982, there was no trust between London and Dublin, between the police forces, or between the governments. As Garret FitzGerald described in his autobiography, when he came into power at the end of 1982, 'the relationship between London and Dublin was little short of disastrous'. He was very determined to try to do something to help Northern Ireland, and he developed a three-pronged approach.

First, a number of us from the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin spent most of our time in Northern Ireland talking to people right across the spectrum – to everybody except the paramilitaries and the terrorists. I was the first Irish civil servant ever to talk to a member of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), during one of those visits in the early 1980s.

Second, FitzGerald tried to re-examine the essence of Irish nationalism, beyond the simple rhetoric that the island should be united; and, over a period of about two years, the notion of Irish nationalism was reformulated, drawing particularly on the principle of consent.

Third, he strove to build up a relationship with the government in London. The negotiations between London and Dublin effectively took two years. The negotiating teams were led by the two cabinet secretaries – negotiations between London and Dublin, which continue, are still led by the two cabinet secretaries.

### Anglo-Irish Agreement

An agreement was eventually reached in November 1985 – the Anglo-Irish Agreement – and it is from this that everything has come. A small Anglo-Irish secretariat – something quite unique – was established in Belfast, and

I was very privileged to be on the Irish side of that secretariat. One purpose of the Irish side was to try to assist the British to rule part of the United Kingdom through sensitising them to Nationalist concerns. We had a number of tasks. One was to try to explain to the British what Nationalists needed; but we were also trying to prove that it was possible for Nationalists to resolve their grievances and differences through dealing directly with us, and we would take up their concerns with the British government.

From a British point of view – and security improvements was Mrs Thatcher's real reason, I think, for agreeing to the Anglo-Irish Agreement – there was, in time, a big change in co-operation on security. We provided, in the Anglo-Irish secretariat in Belfast, a space where the police from both sides could come together and reach out to each other. We also reached out to the British Army. Slowly, then, things progressed.

In the south, we had made a huge step in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, because we said that the only way that Ireland could be united was with the consent of a majority in Northern Ireland. We had hoped at the time that this would be helpful to the Unionists but, as some of you will know, that was not the case, for quite a long while afterwards. They were shocked by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. They were shocked that the British government would allow the Irish government to become involved in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland, and were shocked that Thatcher had reached an agreement with us.

They came out on the streets in very large numbers. There was a peaceful protest on one Saturday in early December 1985, and we reckoned that at least one third of the male Unionist population in Northern Ireland participated in that massive protest. Early in January 1986, there was a march of 18,000 from Derry to Belfast, led mostly by the DUP and the Loyalists, who attempted to expel the Irish civil servants from Belfast. It was



probably the most frightening day of my life. I was inside a heavily fortified building with one other person from Dublin and, between us and roughly 18,000 Loyalists, who very definitely had murder in their minds, there were 600 RUC men. The latter were very welcome to us.

### Downing Street Declaration

As security improved between London and Dublin, it became obvious to the Provisional IRA that they were not going to win what they called a war. John Hume, who had always called for acceptance of difference, giving as an example the manner in which the French and the Germans worked together in the European Community, kept on pressing within the Nationalist community, as did Seamus Mallon, that their grievances, differences and difficulties could be resolved politically by using the contacts between the two governments. By the early 1990s, the governments had become so close that it was possible for them together to produce what is called the Downing Street Declaration, which was a statement of principles, agreed by both governments, that must underpin any settlement in Northern Ireland. The actual negotiation involving the two governments and all the parties in Northern Ireland –

which was not easy – effectively took place from 1994 until 2007.

### Political leadership

I am not going to go into the detail, because it would take too long, but let me just draw a few conclusions. We would not be where we are today but for determined political leadership: on the Irish side, people like Garret FitzGerald, Albert Reynolds, John Bruton, Bertie Ahern and Brian Cowan; on the British side, people like Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, and now David Cameron.

There is now a closeness in the relationship between London and Dublin which is quite extraordinary. The reason is that both sides stepped outside the box. We and the British government were willing to move in order to resolve a problem that had been around for a very long time. People like John Hume were prepared to reach out to the Unionists. People like Geoffrey Howe, who is very proud of the fact that he is a Celt – he is a Welshman – and who explained to Mrs Thatcher, who is not a Celt, what he thought we had in mind. People like Garret FitzGerald, who was prepared to move out of the box and try to learn what other people thought and how we could find ways to resolve the differences between us.

### Inclusiveness

A second, very difficult point is inclusiveness. This is particularly difficult when people are using guns and bombs, and it took a very long time indeed for the Unionists in particular to accept the bona fides of the Republican movement. I am always reminded of President Martti Ahtisaari going down into a bunker about 10 years ago, trying to persuade people that weapons had to be put beyond use. There were some very difficult things that governments had to do. People who had committed awful crimes and had been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment were released. They were released on licence – that is, if they ever committed another crime, they would go back in. Interestingly, only one person has ever been brought back to prison and had their term handed back to them. Though difficult, peace ultimately has to be made on an inclusive basis.

### Trust

The most fundamental issue is trust. You have to build up trust with the other side, and this can be in very small steps. It is the acceptance of difference, acceptance that the other side has a point that is worthwhile listening to. I am proud of the fact that I was the first Irish



*The panel members who participated in the British Academy's discussion meeting on 31 January 2011 were: the former President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari; Francesc Vendrell, a Spanish diplomat with many years of service in the United Nations; Dáithí O'Ceallaigh, former Ambassador of Ireland to London; Lord David Owen, former UK Foreign Secretary. The discussion was chaired by Professor Marianne Elliott FBA. On 1 February the panel reconvened at the Institute of Irish Studies, University of Liverpool: (back row) Dáithí O'Ceallaigh, Professor Jon Saunders (Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Liverpool), Francesc Vendrell, David Owen; (front row) Martti Ahtisaari, Marianne Elliott.*

ambassador to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph to honour the Irish dead in the ANZAC armies. I was also the first Irish ambassador to attend the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday to honour the Irish dead in the British Army. Gestures like that can make a difference.

When the Irish government bought the site of the Battle of the Boyne – and those of you who know anything about Ireland will know how important the Battle of the Boyne is for Unionists – the government determined that they would develop the site in a way that both communities could accept. It was opened by the then Irish Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, and Dr Ian Paisley, who was then the First Minister in Northern Ireland, came down for the opening. When the Taoiseach asked Dr Paisley how he was getting on, Dr Paisley surprised him by saying he was beginning to trust Mr Adams.

**Respect**

I think another requirement for peace is respect. We may not like what the other person thinks, we may not agree with what

they think, but we should respect their views and seek to work with them in a joint endeavour.

Am I hopeful about the future in Northern Ireland? Yes. Do the differences between the two communities remain? Yes. Politically, the system put in place is a very complicated one. In time, it may well change. There are people in Northern Ireland who are opposed to it. There is a small group of dissident IRA who are determined to use the same sort of bombs, killings and murders that the Provisional IRA used for over 30 years. But they do not, and hopefully never will, have the same roots in the community as the Provisional IRA had.

In Ireland, we have an organisation called the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), which culturally is very much a nationalist organisation and, historically, you would never have Unionists playing in GAA games. About two weeks ago, a young woman who was the daughter of the manager of the County Tyrone GAA club, was murdered on her honeymoon in Mauritius. There was a wake in the family home. Every single member of the Government of Northern

Ireland, including the four or five DUP members, went to that wake. Those of you who know something about Northern Ireland will know that the Shankill, traditionally, is a hotbed of unionism and loyalism. A loyalist paramilitary who had served time arrived at the wake to pay his respects. He brought his respects on behalf of the Shankill. This would never have happened five years ago. There is, then, hope in Northern Ireland.

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Dáithí O’Ceallaigh was an Irish diplomat whose career spanned more than 35 years. He held posts in Moscow, London, Belfast, New York, Finland and Estonia, before serving as Ambassador to London for 6 years from 2001. He retired from the Foreign Service in 2009, and is currently Director General of the Institute of International and European Affairs, in Dublin.

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Audio recordings of the British Academy panel discussion may be found via [www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary](http://www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary)

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# British Academy President’s Medal

**T**HE BRITISH ACADEMY President’s Medal was unveiled for the first time at the Academy’s annual awards ceremony on 25 November 2010. Awarded ‘for signal service to the cause of the humanities and social sciences’, it is intended to complement the medals and prizes given by the Academy for academic achievement, by identifying and rewarding outstanding leadership or contributions other than purely academic. Up to five medals may be awarded annually.

Robin Jackson, Chief Executive and Secretary of the British Academy, said: ‘At a time when humanities and social science disciplines are coming under increased funding pressures, it is all the more important that outstanding work to support these areas is properly celebrated. That is the aim of the new British Academy President’s Medals, and we have three very distinguished recipients for the first award.’

The three recipients were Dr Sarah Tyacke, Professor Michael Worton, and Rt Hon. Peter Riddell.

**Dr Sarah Tyacke** was awarded a President’s Medal on the grounds of her service to historical records, in particular through her work as head of the National Archives. In this role she transformed the accessibility of archival material for scholars and the public, and she led on archival legislation and a national archival strategy.

**Professor Michael Worton** was awarded a President’s Medal for his leadership in addressing ‘the languages deficit’ among British university students. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) chose him to lead its Review of Modern Foreign Language provision in higher education in England (published September 2009). His reputation was enhanced by the qualities of that report: its fairness, its ability to consider many sides of



*The British Academy President’s Medal*

the problem, and the careful balance of its exposition. Professor Worton has worked tirelessly to reverse the trend of decline that has beset language study in the UK.

**Rt Hon. Peter Riddell** was awarded a President’s Medal for an outstanding record as the producer of an informed picture of the



*The recipients of the British Academy President's Medal, 25 November 2010: Sarah Tyacke; Michael Worton, with Sir Adam Roberts, President of the British Academy; Peter Riddell. Photos: David Graeme-Baker.*

inner workings of Whitehall, high politics and the party battle. Peter Riddell was a journalist for nearly 40 years, writing mainly, but not exclusively, about British politics, Parliament and political parties. In 2008 he was appointed one of the first Senior Fellows of the newly formed Institute for Government, and in 2009 he co-authored its influential report *Transitions: Preparing for Changes of Government*. He is a member of the judge-led privy counsellor inquiry into any Government complicity or involvement in the mistreatment of British national

detainees by overseas countries. Peter Riddell is a valued supporter of the British Academy, and has taken part in and chaired many Academy discussion meetings.

Peter Riddell said: 'It is a special honour to be recognised by the leading national organisation for the humanities and social sciences. It is very important to bridge the gap between the academic and media worlds. Faults lie on both sides: the short-termism and scandal-driven sensationalism of the media is matched by the all too frequent self-

reverential and self-referential narcissism of academics concerned only with references in journals which only fellow academics read. That is why I applaud the attempts by the British Academy to ensure that the academic voice is heard in public policy debates.'

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More information on the British Academy's medals and prizes, including a full list of the 2010 winners, can be found via [www.britac.ac.uk/about/medals](http://www.britac.ac.uk/about/medals)

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## The designer of the medal

The medal was designed by artist and designer Stephen Raw, who was present at the awards ceremony. Stephen's art is concerned with 'language made visible', and his recent work has included a Royal Ballet memorial in Westminster Abbey, and a Burns Banner to celebrate Robert Burns' 250th anniversary in Edinburgh. The British Library has recently added to their map collection a set of the Tolkien maps that Stephen drew for the 1994 edition of *The Lord of the Rings*, working under the tutelage of Christopher Tolkien.

*Stephen Raw*



# Personifications of Old Age in Medieval Poetry: Charles d'Orléans

In his *Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture*, Professor Ad Putter explored the personifications of Old Age in the poetry of Charles d'Orléans and William Langland. In this edited extract, he discusses the portrayal of Old Age as an opponent in a tennis match.

## Introduction

It is statistically likely that more of us will see Old Age than did our ancestors in medieval England. The period after the Black Death, which arrived in 1348 but returned in waves thereafter, was particularly depressing for life expectancy. Records from the city of Florence provide some indicative figures: the life expectancy there was 40 in 1300; in 1375, after the plague, it had gone down to 18.<sup>1</sup> It might be thought, then, that poets from this period would not have much relevant to say about what getting old feels like, especially since they were also writing at a time when personification allegory had become the dominant form. In allegorical fiction, feelings (e.g. Hope, Love, Hate) and abstract concepts (e.g. Youth and Old Age) behave as if they were people (or objects), in obvious violation of the laws of physics. Can we really expect to learn anything about ageing from later medieval allegories?

I would like to consider that question with reference to a ballade by Charles d'Orléans. Charles defied statistical averages: he died in 1465, aged 70. Such longevity was not in fact all that unusual, despite the average life expectancy, which was distorted by the large numbers of childhood deaths in the period. If you survived into adulthood, chances were that you would live for another 30 years or more.<sup>2</sup>

If Charles d'Orléans had reasons for being conscious about his age, these reasons were altogether different. Marking time for 25 years as a political hostage, he must have felt that his best years were slipping away from him, so the topic of ageing naturally weighed on his mind. He was only 20 when he was captured at the battle of Agincourt and

separated from his wife Bonne d'Armagnac. She died when he was around 40, still stuck in England; he was coming up for 45 when he was finally released. Now the life of a royal hostage like Charles was not like that of modern prisoners, and recent scholarship has discredited the false image of Charles pining away in harsh confinement.<sup>3</sup> It is better to imagine Charles as an involuntary guest; he participated in the social life of his custodians and even learned to speak and write English. Yet the revisionist idea of Charles comfortably lodged with cultured and congenial hosts is equally false, for a man who is enjoying himself cannot be held to an extortionate ransom. In Charles's case, the

price of freedom was set at 240,000 *écus*. He paid it willingly.

## Vieillesse in Ballade 113

In English captivity Charles wrote his finest poetry about ageing. The ballade I would like to consider, composed by Charles just before his release, is upbeat, if precariously so (see panel).<sup>4</sup>

The unifying conceit here is the game of tennis as it used to be played, without rackets (hence the name *jeu de paume*), without net, and in this period typically with three players on either side.<sup>5</sup> The scoring was in multiples of 15, i.e. 15, 30, 45 (later abbreviated to 40), and the minimal winning score 60. With the

### Ballade 113 (Champion XC)

I'ay tant joué avecques Aage  
A la paulme que maintenant  
J'ay quarante cinq; sur bon gage  
Nous jouons, non pas por neant.  
Assez me sens fort et puissant  
De garder mon jeu jusqu'a cy,  
Ne je ne crains riens que Soussy.

Car Soussy tant me discourage  
De jouer et va estouppant  
Les cops que fiers a l'avantage.  
Trop seurement est rachassant;  
Fortune si lui est aidant.  
Mais Espoir est mon bon amy,  
Ne je ne crains riens que Soussy.

Viellesse de douleur enrage  
De ce que le jeu dure tant,  
Et dit en son felon langage  
Que les chasses dorevanant  
Merchera pour m'estre nuisant.  
Mais ne me'n chault, je la deffy,  
Ne je ne crains riens que Soussy.

#### L'envoy

Se Bon Eur me tient convenant,  
Je ne doubte ne tant ne quant  
Tout mon adversaire party;  
Ne je ne crains riens que Soussy.

I have been playing tennis with Ageing  
For so long that I have now reached  
Forty-five; we are playing  
For a proper stake, not for nothing.  
I feel myself strong and capable enough  
To stay in the game until this point,  
And I fear nothing apart from Anxiety.

For Anxiety discourages me so  
From playing and goes about stopping  
All the shots I make to gain advantage.  
He is too good at retrieving them,  
For Fortune helps him out.  
But I have Hope on my side,  
And I fear nothing apart from Anxiety.

Old Age is furious with distress  
That the game is taking so long,  
And says in her spiteful way,  
That she will from now on  
Mark the chases to harm me,  
But I don't care; I defy her,  
And I fear nothing apart from Anxiety

#### Envoy

If Happiness keeps his promise,  
I have no fear whatsoever  
Of the entire opposition side,  
And I fear nothing apart from Anxiety.

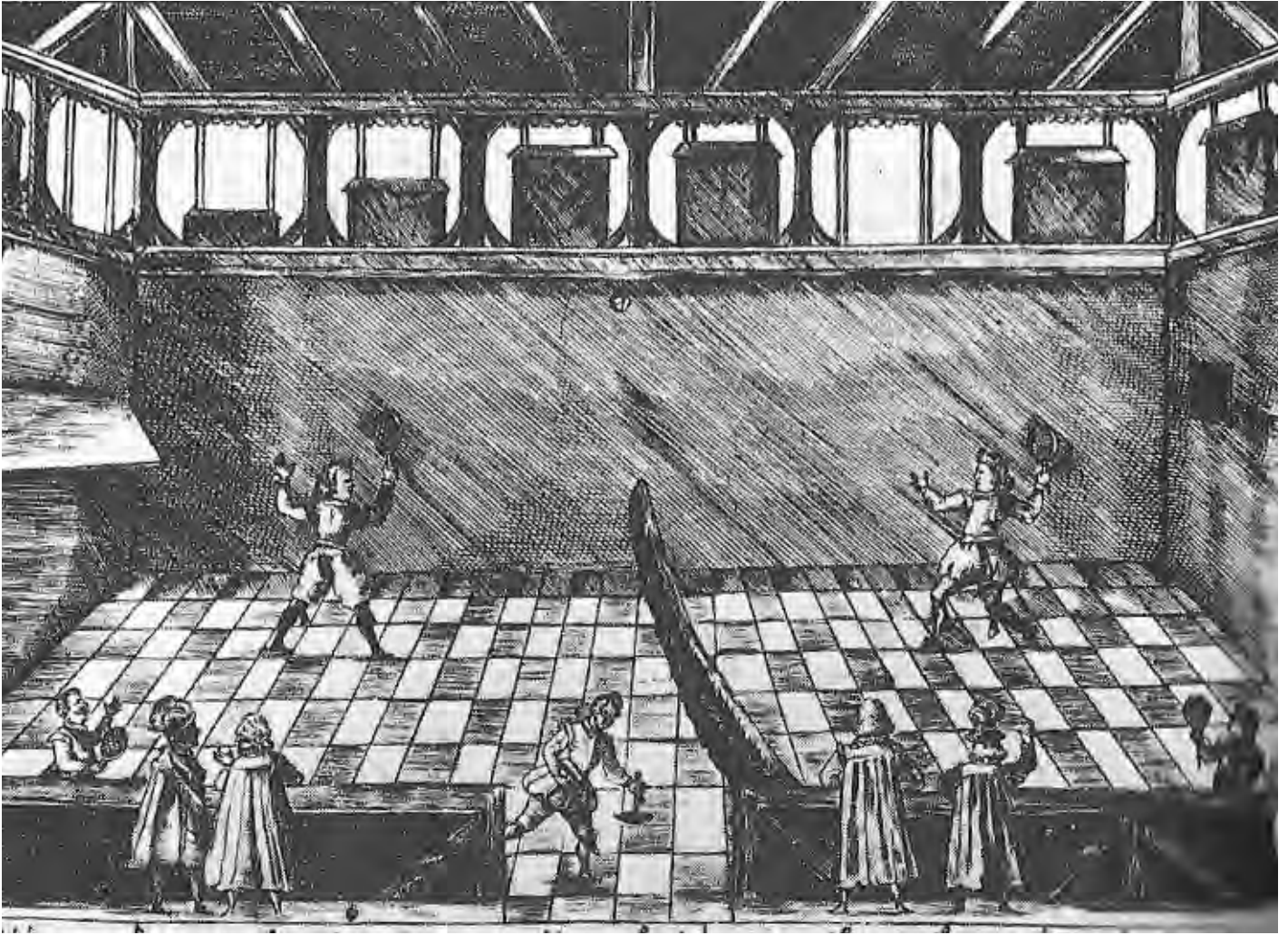


Figure 1. 'Jeu de paume', from a copper engraving, c.1606. The net and rackets are post-medieval, but note that, apart from the players, there is an umpire, ready to 'mark the chases' with a marking implement which he carries by its handle. Reproduced from Gillmeister, Tennis, p. 158.

score at 45, we enter this tennis game at a decisive moment, and in the game of life 45 is also a critical age. As John Burrow has shown, it was common in the Middle Ages to divide the Ages of Man into three (or more) stages: childhood, youth, old age (sometimes followed by a fourth: decrepitude). In that scheme, the crucial division between youth and old age was usually drawn at 45.<sup>6</sup> In William Langland's *Piers Plowman* Ymaginatif tells Will:

I have folwed thee, in feith, thise fyve and  
fourty wynter,  
And manye tymes have meved thee to  
mynne on thyn ende [mynne reflect]  
And how fele fernyeres are faren, and so  
fewe to come [fele ... faren many past  
years have gone]  
And of thi wilde wantownesse tho thou  
yong were,

To amende it in thi myddel age, lest myght  
the faille

In thyn olde elde ...

(*Piers Plowman* B XII.3-8)<sup>7</sup>

After 45 winters Will, like Charles, stands on the brink of Old Age. The same number occurs in Passus XI of *Piers Plowman*, where the symbolic significance is clearly spelt out:

Coveitise of Eighes confornted me noon after  
And folwed me fourty winter and a fifte  
moore ...

.....

By wissyng of this wenche I dide, hir wordes  
were so swete, [wissyng guiding]

Til I foryat [Y]outhe and yarn into [E]lde  
[yarn ran; Elde old age]

(*Piers Plowman* B XI. 46-7, 59-60)

The editor A.V.C. Schmidt does not capitalise  
Youthe and Elde, but to make proper sense

of this passage we need to have at least one foot in the allegorical fiction: Will is on the road with Coveitise of Eighes, i.e. blindly following his desires; she does the navigating ('wissyng'). Then, after 45 years, Will forgets to bring Youth along and bumps into Old Age. A literal-minded objection to the allegory would be that we cannot 'forget' our youth as we 'forget' a person or a thing, but there is connection between these two propositions that vindicates Langland's allegory: people take their youth for granted, and, when they realise they have lost it, it is like discovering they have left their house keys behind.

Returning to Charles's ballade, the significance of 45 in medieval thought explains why Soussy (Anxiety) becomes such a nuisance in this poem. At 45, age is not on

your side anymore – hence Age is on the opposing tennis team – and although Charles has been doing fine until now, *jusqu'a cy*, the game is in the balance and there is a lot at stake (for this is really the game of life). Can he hold his nerve at match point? Soussy enters the allegorical frame at precisely that point, as the living embodiment of all the pressures and tensions of the situation.<sup>8</sup> He is the opponent who frustrates your best efforts, who effortlessly blocks your shots so that you never manage to win *avantage* (pun intended).<sup>9</sup>

Vieillesse, visibly annoyed that Charles is still going strong, is given an interesting role in the allegorical fiction. In this period, too, tennis was usually umpired; but the function of the umpire was not simply to keep the score, as Old Age keeps careful count of our years, but also 'to mark the chases'. As Heiner Gillmeister explains, under medieval rules, a point was not automatically lost if the ball bounced twice in the playing area; rather, the players would try to stop the ball as soon as possible after its second bounce:

The spot where the ball had been blocked was marked and referred to as a chase (French *chasse*). After every chase, the teams changed ends, and in the rally which followed both teams were obliged to win the chase. This meant that the team attacking the chase had to play the ball in such a way as to force it beyond the mark of the previous chase. If they succeeded, the point was theirs, if not, their opponents would be credited with it.<sup>10</sup>

For competitive players 'the measuring of the chases was a deadly serious matter', and teams sometimes came to blows over disputed markings.<sup>11</sup> With Vieillesse as umpire, we know that the crucial refereeing decisions will be going against Charles. Again the allegory manages to capture what life is like as we get older. We carry on as normal trying to meet the targets we are set, and, though in reality we are the ones who slow down, our perception is that the bar is being unfairly raised, that Old Age is out to make our tasks impossible. And 'marking the chases' may be meaningful in another sense, too. The phrase is listed as proverbial in the

earliest edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'académie française* (Paris, 1694, s.v. *marquer*). The fuller entry from the 1798 edition (s.v. *chasse*) seems particularly relevant: *Marquer ceste chasse* means proverbially or figuratively 'to pick out a word, or to take note of a peculiarity in a situation or in someone's behaviour, that can be turned to your advantage.' This figurative sense provides yet further insight into how Vieillesse operates in real life: she knows your weaknesses and uses them to gain the upper hand.

The details of the ballade, then, are designed to justify the angst that nags away at the speaker's optimistic defiance and that, returning with every refrain, simply refuses to go away. It nags away again in the big 'If' of the Envoy: 'If Happiness (*Bon Eur*) keeps his promise, I have no fear at all.' Of course, Happiness does not keep promises, as is clear from an earlier ballade by Charles, Ballade 82 (Champion CVIII), where Happiness is allegorised as a companion (*Bon Temps*) who promised to help Charles in his fight against Old Age but let him down. Charles's names for Happiness, *Bon Eur* and *Bon Temps*, say it all: Happy Hour and Good Times are by definition temporary; and sooner or later *Bon Heur*, now on Charles's team, will go over to the other side to be with Fortune, who is his mistress.

#### Notes

- 1 S. Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 21.
- 2 J.T. Rosenthal, *Old Age in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), p. 3.
- 3 See especially William Askins, 'The Brothers Orléans and their Keepers', in *Charles d'Orléans in England* (1415–1440), ed. Mary-Jo Arn (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), pp. 27–46. Mary-Jo Arn's 'Bibliographical Supplement' in the same volume (pp. 215–225) updates the bibliography by Deborah Nelson, *Charles d'Orléans: An Analytical Bibliography* (London: MHRA, 1990).
- 4 References to Charles's French poems are to the edition by Jean-Claude Mühlethaler (Paris: Lettres gothiques, 1992), with cross-references to the poems as numbered in the edition by Pierre Champion, *Charles D'Orléans: Poésies, Classiques français du Moyen Âge*, 2 vols (Paris: Champion, 1923–7). I have occasionally amended Mühlethaler's text in accordance with my own understanding of the sense.

5 See Heiner Gillmeister, *Tennis: A Cultural History* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p. 79.

6 J.A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), especially pp. 69–70, and see also his 'Langland *Nel Mezzo del Cammin*', in P.L. Heyworth (ed.), *Medieval Studies for J. A. W. Bennett* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 21–41. For discussion of the French tradition see Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, *Poétiques du quinzième siècle* (Paris: Nizet, 1983), pp. 148–157, and H. Dubois and M. Zink (eds.), *Les Âges de la vie au Moyen-Âge* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1992).

7 This and subsequent citations from *Piers Plowman* are from the second edition of the B-Text by A.V.C. Schmidt (London: Everyman, 1995); any minor emendations I have made to Schmidt's text are indicated by square brackets. It should be noted that Schmidt disputes the meaning that J.A. Burrow sees in the number of years; his own interpretation can be found in his note to XI. 47. Charles d'Orléans seems to me to provide yet further support in favour of Burrow's view that 45 marks the boundary between middle age and old age.

8 It is possible that Souci in this lyric also had a specific personal meaning for Charles. According to Pierre Champion, Charles wrote this ballade when he had heard his release had been approved, and was worried whether he would be able to raise the ransom: Pierre Champion, *Vie de Charles d'Orléans* (Paris: Champion, 1911), pp. 300–301.

9 As Gillmeister notes, the term was already current in the fifteenth century: *Tennis*, pp. 125–6.

10 Gillmeister, *Tennis*, p. 39.

11 Ibid.

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Ad Putter is Professor of Medieval English Literature at the University of Bristol.

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His Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture was delivered on 21 October 2011 at the University of Bristol, and again on 17 November 2011 as part of the British Academy's 'Medieval Week' at the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

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The full version of this lecture, which looks in more detail at Charles D'Orléans's French and English poetry and at *Piers Plowman* will be published in *The Review of English Studies*. We thank the journal editors for permission to print this extract.

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# The medieval Welsh poetry associated with Owain Glyndŵr

*The 2010 Sir John Rhŷs Memorial Lecture formed part of the British Academy's 'Medieval Week', hosted by the Royal Society of Edinburgh. In the following extract, Professor Gruffydd Aled Williams starts by describing how two medieval Welsh poets celebrated Owain Glyndŵr's less peaceful visit to Scotland.*

THE EARLIEST EXTANT POETRY relating to Owain Glyndŵr leads me to recall an episode in Scottish history, one much impressed on contemporary and later Scottish consciousness. The early 1380s witnessed rising tensions between England and Scotland, and when the truce of 1369 expired in February 1384 the two nations edged towards open war. Scottish attacks on the English-occupied zone of southern Scotland prompted a retaliatory cross-border expedition from Berwick by John of Gaunt in April 1384, but the arrival in May 1385 of a substantial force of Scotland's French allies under Jean de Vienne, admiral of France, was the cue for a much more serious English response. Issuing a general feudal levy for a force to advance, according to the summons 'against the said Scots, to restrain manfully and powerfully, their rebellion, perfidy and evil', Richard II, at 19 years of age exercising his first command and eager to impress, mustered one of the largest English armies of the 14th century, a total of almost 14,000 men. Advancing from Newcastle and crossing into Scotland on 6 August in three battle formations – each member of the force according to the king's ordinances of war bearing the arms of St George before and behind – the English army advanced in a destructive swathe, a medieval equivalent of 'shock and awe'. The Westminster chronicler wrote of the army 'giving free and uninterrupted play to slaughter, rapine, and fire-raising all along a six-mile front and leaving the entire countryside in ruins behind them'; Walter Bower, drawing later on bruised Scottish memories in his *Scotichronicon*, referred to

'an arrogant host, destroying everything on all sides and saving nothing.' Having laid waste to Lothian, the English reached Edinburgh and destroyed it by fire, not sparing the church of St Giles. The abbeys of Melrose, Dryburgh and Newbattle were also burned and destroyed during this punitive campaign, which ended with the return of the English army to Newcastle after a fortnight's ravaging in Scotland.

In the absence of a native polity, it was in English armies fighting in France and Scotland that the nobility of post-conquest Wales – with few dissident exceptions – found an outlet for military action. Owain Glyndŵr's own grandfather had been summoned to campaign in English armies 'contra Scotos inimicos et rebelles nostros' in 1333 and 1334. And it was in connection with the events just recalled that his grandson served his military apprenticeship. Muster rolls show him – together with his brother Tudur and Crach Ffynnant, his 'prophet' in 1400 – serving in the English

garrison of Berwick in 1384 under the command of a veteran Welsh captain, Sir Gregory Sais (his surname means 'Englishman', denoting one of English inclinations or of English tongue). And Owain's deposition in 1386 – 'aged twenty-seven years and more' – in connection with the Scrope/Grosvenor dispute before the Court of Chivalry confirms his presence in the royal army which devastated Scotland in 1385. Further confirmation of this occurs in a *Iolo Goch* poem addressed to Glyndŵr, probably in early July 1385, as he set off for the war in Scotland, probably in the retinue of the earl of Arundel, whose lands in the Welsh march bordered on those of Owain.

## Poem by Iolo Goch

The massing of armies in what the Westminster chronicler described as the hot summer of 1385 is vividly conveyed in the opening couplet of Iolo's poem which refers to a 'Great movement' of lords. The Virgin Mary's protection is invoked for the departing hero, Owain's battle-charge is

### *Iolo Goch* extract (A)

Pan aeth mewn gwroliaeth gwrdd,	When he went with mighty prowess,
Gorugwr fu garw agrwdd,	He was a terrifying and powerful piercer,
Ni wnaeth ond marchogaeth meirch,	He did nothing but ride steeds,
Gorau amser, mewn gwrmseirch,	The best of times, in dark-blue armour,
Dwyn paladr, gwaladr gwiwlew,	Bearing a lance, fine and valiant lord,
Soced dur a siaced tew,	A steel spearhead and a thick jacket,
Arwain rhest a phenffestin	Wearing a rest and a mail cap
A helm wen, gŵr hael am win,	And a white helmet, a generous provider of wine,
Ac yn ei phen, nen iawnraifft,	And surmounting it, fine-plumed lord,
Adain rudd o edn yr Aifft.	A red-winged phoenix crest.
Gorau sawdr gwsr ydoedd,	For a while he was the best soldier
Gyda Syr Grigor, iôr oedd,	With Sir Gregory, he was a lord,
Ym Merwig, hirdrig herwdref,	In Berwick, a long-enduring town under attack,
Maer i gadw'r gaer gydag ef.	He was a steward defending the fort with him.

compared to that of Bendigeidfran, legendary king of Britain, and Owain's grandfather and father cited for their renown. Having lauded Owain briefly as his parents' filial paragon and cited his love of poets, Iolo then draws on a topos of Welsh eulogy, in which the hero is dually conceived, being both a bold challenger of the mighty and one who is mild-mannered before the weak. He firstly asserts Owain's innate gentleness as one who would not forcefully seize a toy from a young boy or even admonish him verbally (this may reflect Owain's likely domestic status at the time as a young *paterfamilias*). But then the tone changes abruptly as the contrasting aspect of the topos is developed and emphasised. A different Owain appears as Iolo turns to portray him in his full military might, specifically citing his service at Berwick under Sir Gregory Sais the previous year. A cameo portrait of Owain replete with terms relating to knightly military equipment (some of them, significantly, loanwords from English or Anglo-French) would, no doubt, have fed the young esquire's self-

image as he set off again for Scotland – see extract (A)<sup>1</sup>

The poet then enlarges upon Owain's knightly prowess, seemingly distinguishing between single combat in tournament and action in battle. Even if this, as is likely, is mere conventionalised praise, it passes the test of verisimilitude: the 1380s saw what Juliet Barker has called 'a sudden resurgence of tourneying activity on the borders', largely around Berwick, and, in view of John of Gaunt's *chevauchée* into Scotland from Berwick in the spring of 1384, it is possible that Glyndŵr may have seen some military action. The final section of the poem recalling the alleged effects of Owain's last tour of duty in Scotland, though patently conventional and hyperbolic, is not without interest. According to Iolo, all Scotland will remember the terror caused by 'the candle of battle', a metaphor, of course, with incendiary connotations. The routed Scots, identified – with interesting ethnic confusion – as 'Deifr' (literally 'the men of Deira', remembered as enemies of the Britons in the heroic age of Welsh tradition),

are depicted as crying like wild goats. Iolo Goch was no Celtophile; he had harsh words to say too about the Irish kings of Ulster and Leinster who resisted Richard II. He is, of course, reflecting what one historian has called 'a discourse of abuse' commonly aimed at the Scots from south of the border at this time. In the genealogy of Scotophobic insults, Iolo's 'wild goats' is a hybrid: it echoes such barbs as an anonymous Latin poet's *gens bruta Scotiae* and Ranulph Higden's *barbari satis et silvestres* ('very savage and wild') and various disparaging animal metaphors, such as featuring Scots as dogs and swine (anticipating perhaps the infamous modern 'ginger rodent'). Iolo ends his poem in a crescendo of hyperbole, his patron's allegedly booty-laden service in Scotland being grimly depicted as 'A year feeding wolves', its destructive swathe being such that neither grass nor dock-leaves grew from English Berwick – as the poet significantly calls it – to Maesbury in Shropshire, a mere stone's throw from Glyndŵr's home at Sycharth.



Figure 1. Owain Glyndŵr's home at Sycharth Castle, as it is today. Photo: Crown copyright, Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.



### Poem by Gruffydd Llwyd

A poem addressed to Owain by Gruffudd Llwyd shares a historical context with Iolo's poem, being a celebration of Owain's safe return from war in Scotland, probably at some time during September 1385 after the English army had dispersed from Newcastle. References to Owain as 'defender of the Glen of the great Dee of the rapid water' and as 'My favourite above the manor of the Dee' suggest that the setting for the poem was Owain's ancestral home on the banks of the river Dee at Glyndyfrdwy in Merioneth, the only poem addressed to Owain for which this can confidently be claimed. Having hailed Glyndŵr as 'Owain of the fine helmet' (recalling Iolo Goch's mention of the red phoenix crest), Gruffudd Llwyd recalls the former joy of carousing on mead and wine at his patron's court, and his disquiet and grief following Owain's departure for war in Scotland. He relates that, when his anxiety was at its worst, relief came in the form of a messenger's tidings that Owain had gained great renown in battle, a theme to which the poet returns at the end of his poem. He then proceeds to elevate his patron by means of comparisons which clearly reflect the chivalric cultural tastes of Owain and his court. Owain is compared to a trinity of knightly heroes of romance: Uther Pendragon, father of king Arthur, Glyndŵr's namesake Owain son of Urien (as depicted in the Welsh tale of *Owain* or *The Lady of the Well*, counterpart of Chrétien de Troyes' *Yvain*), and Fulk Fitz Warin, hero of an Anglo-Norman romance from the Shropshire March. Of these comparisons that with Owain son of Urien, which at one point exactly replicates the wording of the Welsh version of the tale, is much the more extended. This may reflect the poet's familiarity with the source or be due in part to the fact of homonymy, the shared name of Owain prompting the comparison. Having cited these comparisons, Gruffudd Llwyd then portrays Glyndŵr the warrior in conventional terms: the force of his charge shatters his lance which strikes through the chinks in his enemy's armour with the effect of thunderbolts; he scatters his adversaries in all directions, and his spear is suitably bloodied. The depiction of warfare is stylised: it owes more to both Welsh bardic

exemplars and the chivalric depiction of warfare in romances than to the irregular actuality of war as experienced by Glyndŵr in Scotland in 1385 in an army which never saw formal battle. The poet ends by claiming to have heard tidings of Owain from a herald: whether literally true or not, in what was something of a golden age for heralds – prime disseminators of tales of deeds of prowess – and a time when oral reports of valour were crucial in promoting martial reputations, the claim does not lack verisimilitude. Gruffudd Llwyd rejoices that his heraldic informant had brought news that Owain was unharmed and that his valiant deeds were widely hailed, then concludes by juxtaposing the pathos of sad cries heard in Scotland with the feats and triumphant conquests of 'the knight of the Glen' which, the poet exults, had earned his patron renown (Welsh *clod*). That such an equation of participation in war with the seeking of renown and reputation reflects contemporary chivalric ideals hardly needs emphasis.

### Iolo Goch's description of Sycharth

By way of contrast to the military focus of the two poems already cited, a poem by Iolo Goch – composed after 1386 and before the revolt of 1400, possibly in the 1390s – places Owain in the pacific and domestic setting of his motte and bailey residence at Sycharth on the Welsh border. There is evidence that Iolo had visited Sycharth before 1382, and it has been suggested that the poem in question celebrates a new building. A 16th-century bardic statute refers to a former right of poets to receive gifts from a patron on the occasion of the building of a new house, and a number of surviving poems focusing on architectural details of patrons' courts, as does the core of Iolo's poem, tend to confirm the existence of such a custom.

Describing himself as an old man who is fulfilling two previous promises to visit Sycharth, and depicting his journey there as a pilgrimage – the first of many religious metaphors in the poem – Iolo lays the foundation for his praise by evoking the appeal of Sycharth in general terms: it is 'The court of a baron, a place of refinement, / Where many poets frequent, a place of the good life.' Turning to specifics, he first refers to the moat surrounding Owain's residence:

its encircling water is implicitly compared to a golden ring and described as being crossed by a bridge leading to a gateway, wide enough, says the poet, to admit a hundred loads. Moats, of course, were contemporary status symbols: as Christopher Dyer has said, 'If a lord was unable to afford a castle, a moat was the next best thing'.

Iolo's eye then focuses on the fine timberwork of Owain's court, a central feature of the poem. Here it is worth quoting Dr Lawrence Butler's remark about medieval Welsh gentry timber halls: 'The festive hall was an owner's pride, a bard's joy, and a carpenter's masterpiece.' In a couplet ingeniously binding in the tight bonds of *cynghanedd* different but related words deriving from *cwpl*, English 'couple' – meaning one of inclined beams or crucks converging at the top to support a roof – he replicates verbally the aesthetically pleasing interlocking of the timbers: 'Cyplau sydd, gwaith cwplws ŷnt, / Cwpledig pob cwpl ydynt;' ('There are couples, they are coupled work, / Each couple is coupled together'). The awe-inspiring aspect of the timberwork inclines Iolo towards ecclesiastical metaphors: this is unsurprising, as architectural historians have seen crucks or couples as timber replications of Gothic ecclesiastical pointed arches of stone. Sycharth reminds Iolo firstly of 'Patrick's belfry, fruit of French workmanship', the tower of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, newly built in 1370 by Archbishop Thomas Minot; and, secondly of 'The cloister of Westminster, gentle enclosure', a feature of the abbey completed by Abbot Nicholas Litlington before his death in 1386. These comparisons with faraway contemporary ecclesiastical structures of note tell us something about the cultural reach of both poet and patron: neither Iolo nor Glyndŵr – both familiar with an upper class world of relative geographical mobility and broad horizons – were isolated backwoodsmen ignorant of metropolitan developments. The suggestion of an affinity with ecclesiastical architecture is repeated in a comparison of Sycharth's timberwork with the symmetry and splendour of a gilded chancel and with stone vaulting. Further, having evoked Sycharth's lofty aspect atop its grassed motte, Iolo playfully imagines its high timber pillars as raising it literally



Figure 2.  
Pen and ink drawing  
by Douglas Hague,  
showing reconstruction  
view of Sycharth Castle.  
Image: Crown copyright.

nearer heaven; there are once again obvious religious connotations, and at the same time the wording implies that Owain's court is indeed a virtual heaven.

The court's storeyed sleeping quarters – described as being atop pillars – are then evoked. Four bedchambers where poets slept are said to have been turned into eight, a claim born perhaps of hyperbole suggestive of an abundance of bardic visitors and thus of Owain's reputation for liberality. Amongst the luxury features noted by Iolo at Sycharth are a 'tiled roof' on every building – excavations during the 1960s suggest that the tiles referred to were in fact slates, an occasional meaning at this time – and a chimney to channel smoke, a marker of a high status house in a period more commonly of sooty open hearths. Wealth and luxury are also evoked by a comparison of Sycharth's wardrobes – in the medieval sense of storage rooms for precious items, clothes or armour – to a shop in Cheapside, the principal shopping street of medieval London (the metropolitan comparison is again significant).

To end his celebration of Sycharth's architecture Iolo reverts to ecclesiastical imagery. His description of Owain's court

as a lime-washed cross-shaped church probably echoes its likely H-shaped plan, consisting of a central hall with flanking wings, a common feature of ambitious gentry houses. He also cites 'Chapels with fine glass windows', a description not to be taken literally – Sycharth is unlikely to have had a private chapel – but an image echoing the previous ecclesiastical metaphors. Like its slate roof and chimney, Sycharth's glazed windows – common in churches but a luxury in domestic abodes at this time – were details selected by the poet to depict a dwelling of high status and lordly refinement.

Turning away from the architecture of Sycharth, Iolo provides a cameo of its exterior appurtenances, features of Owain's demesne essential to sustain his lordly existence. In the sharp clarity of its detail and its seigneurial setting, it is a verbal counterpart of some of the idealised calendar illustrations of the *Très Riches Heures* of the Duke de Berry. Iolo cites a bakehouse, an orchard, a vineyard, a mill, a stone dovecote, and a fishpond (whose remains are still to be seen at Sycharth) replete with pikes and whitefish. Owain's bord-land is portrayed as the haunt of

peacocks and herons; there are hay and grass meadows, corn in carefully tended fields, a rabbit-warren, strong work-horses for drawing ploughs, and an adjoining deer-park. And the fortunate Owain too has his bondsmen (*caith*) to undertake what Iolo blithely calls 'all good work'.

Towards the end of his poem Iolo's eye turns back to the court's interior. Conveyed there are the best brew of Shrewsbury beer, bragget, white bread, wine, and meat destined for the kitchen. Sycharth, with its daily plenitude, is a veritable pavilion for poets and the finest timber court in the kingdom, fully deserving of God's protection. Then comes a warm evocation of domestic bliss: Owain's wife, Margaret Hanmer, whom he married about 1383, daughter of Sir David Hanmer, Justice of the King's Bench, is a fleeting female presence in the otherwise unremittingly male world of the Glyndŵr poems; we hear also of their children (referred to as coming 'two at a time', perhaps suggesting a 1390s date for the poem) – see extract (B).

In Iolo's poem a medieval microcosm endures in words. The only other contemporary description of Sycharth is less effusive and very different in tone. In a

*Iolo Goch* extract (B)

A gwraig orau o'r gwagedd,	And the best woman of all women,
Gwyn fy mynd o'i gwin a'i medd!	Blessed am I receiving her wine and mead!
Merch eglur llin marchoglyw,	A fair daughter from the line of a knightly lord,
Urddol hael anianol yw;	She is noble and generous by nature;
A'i blant a ddeuant bob ddau,	And his children come two at a time,
Nythaid teg o benaethau.	A fair nestful of chieftains.
Anfynych iawn fu yno	It was very rare to see there
Weled na chlicied na chlo,	Either a bolt or a lock,
Na phorthoriaeth ni wnaeth neb;	Neither did anyone perform portage;
Ni bydd eisiau, budd oseb,	There will be no want, a beneficial trait,
Na gwall na newyn na gwarth,	Nor lack nor hunger nor shame,
Na syched fyth yn Sycharth.	Nor thirst ever in Sycharth.
Gorau Cymro, tro trylew,	It's the best Welshman of the brave deed,
Piau'r wlad, lin Pywer Lew,	Who owns the land, of the line of Pywer Lew,
Gŵr meingryf, gorau mangre,	A slim and strong man, best of locations,
A phiau'r llys, hoff yw'r lle.	And he owns the court, a delightful place.

The poem's last lines provide a unique, if stylised and all too compressed, snapshot of Glyndŵr's physical appearance, describing him as *gŵr meingryf*, a slim and strong man:

Gorau Cymro, tro trylew,	It's the best Welshman of the brave deed,
Piau'r wlad, lin Pywer Lew,	Who owns the land, of the line of Pywer Lew,
Gŵr meingryf, gorau mangre,	A slim and strong man, best of locations,
A phiau'r llys, hoff yw'r lle.	And he owns the court, a delightful place.

letter written at the height of Owain's revolt in May 1403 by Henry, the king's eldest son (the later Henry V), to his father, king Henry IV, he relates how he and his army came to Sycharth, a court that was well-built and Glyndŵr's principal residence. He tells how, finding it abandoned, they burnt it totally together with the nearby dwellings of Owain's tenants. When the motte at Sycharth was excavated in the 1960s fragments of burnt oak were found, sorry remnants of the 'finest timber court' which inspired the muse of Iolo Goch.

**Note**

1 Quotations of original Iolo Goch text are from D.R. Johnston (ed.), *Gwaith Iolo Goch* (Cardiff, 1988). Translations are by GAW.

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Gruffydd Aled Williams is Emeritus Professor of Welsh at Aberystwyth University. He has edited *Llên Cymru* since 1997, and was the first elected Chairman of the Association for the Study of Welsh Language and Literature (2004). His works include *Ymryson Edmwnd Prys a Wiliam Cynwal* (1986), a contribution to *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Vol. 2: The Middle Ages* (2005), and over 40 articles on medieval and renaissance Welsh literature.

His Sir John Rhys Memorial Lecture was delivered on 16 November 2010. An audio recording is available via [www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary](http://www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary)

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# Forging the Anglo-Saxon Past: Beverley Minster in the 14th Century

British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow  
Dr David Woodman reveals the steps  
that the Beverley clergy took to fill some  
awkward gaps in their legal records.

**D**ESPITE THE FACT that Beverley Minster was an early 8th-century Anglo-Saxon foundation, and despite the fact that many of the rights it possessed in the post-Conquest period would have been acquired much earlier, the Beverley archive is noticeably deficient in Anglo-Saxon documentation, containing only two genuine Anglo-Saxon writs<sup>1</sup> in the name of King Edward the Confessor (1042-66). It is impossible to be sure exactly when Beverley lost its Anglo-Saxon records, but there is reason to believe that already by the early 12th century its archive was meager. Beverley traditions themselves lay stress on the role of the Vikings in the 860s in the destruction of their muniments.

At two points in the 14th century, the Minster faced critical challenges to its high standing and status. Firstly, in the early 1330s, one of its very great privileges, the collection of a grain tax known as thraves, was questioned by various minor churches in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Secondly, in the early 1380s, Alexander Neville, then archbishop of York (1374-88), conducted an aggressive visitation of the Minster which eventually resulted in the excommunication of various Beverley clergy. On both occasions the Beverley community reacted by having documentation composed which was designed to demonstrate that their privileges were of ancient, Anglo-Saxon origin. In one instance an idiosyncratic Middle English rhyming charter was produced and in another a handsome cartulary:<sup>2</sup> both were intended to overcome the lacuna in Beverley's documentary evidence from the Anglo-Saxon period and both involved a certain amount of re-writing of Beverley's own Anglo-Saxon past.

## Beverley charter S 451

In the years 1330-1, the parochial clergy of the East Riding of Yorkshire revolted and withheld the payment of thraves to Beverley Minster. Something of the nature of this conflict can be learned from a letter of the Beverley chapter to the archbishop of York, dated 6 November 1330. Here members of the Beverley community state that they cannot condone the proposal of the Kirk Ella church that the thraves should be placed in impartial hands. It was their view that Beverley's title to thraves was well known throughout Yorkshire and had been since time immemorial. In an attempt to assert their rights, the Beverley chapter appointed a certain Nicholas of Hugate

to represent the Minster's rights at Parliament. Petitions to Parliament needed to be reinforced by actual copies of charters and Hugate can be found taking copies of various charters with him to prove Beverley's case.

It is at this time that the Beverley charter known as S 451 in its current form came into being. The earliest extant copy of this charter is found on a single-sheet in the British Library dated to the mid-14th century. The charter is written across the page; it is cast in the name of King Æthelstan (924-39) and presented as if it were an official Anglo-Saxon charter. But it is very clearly *not* a genuine Anglo-Saxon document. In fact it is a long and elaborate literary piece written in rhyming Middle English of the mid-14th century.

The rhyming charter purports to grant a wide range of rights and the all-encompassing nature of the charter makes it a kind of pseudo-*pancarte*, that is, a document that was literally intended to cover all the rights belonging to a particular institution. Some of the rights granted could have had a basis in Anglo-Saxon times and in Anglo-Saxon documentation, but the majority of the rights being conveyed did not come into existence until the post-Conquest period. The fact that about 30 of the 87 lines concentrate on the issue of Beverley's rights to thraves makes it clear that in its current form the rhyming charter was fabricated to counter the crisis of 1330-1.

The fact that this forged rhyming charter was written in Middle English and took the form of a *pancarte* made it a document which could be updated with new details when required. An indication of this updating process is given by the copy of the rhyming charter that was made in the Beverley cartulary fifty years later in the 1380s. In this cartulary version, six extra lines have been added to the text of the rhyming charter. These six extra lines deal, in a generalised fashion, with rights gained for Beverley Minster in the mid to late 11th century by Archbishop Ealdred (1061-9). The only two genuine Anglo-Saxon documents preserved in the Beverley archive are both writs granted by King Edward the Confessor to Archbishop Ealdred. So it is clear that whoever was copying the rhyming charter of King Æthelstan into the Beverley cartulary had found other charters in the archive which referred to Anglo-Saxon grants and sought to incorporate their details.

The updating of this rhyming charter demonstrates that it had become an important legal tool for the Beverley community. In making its point it called on the name of the first king of a united Anglo-Saxon England, one known to have been generous to northern churches. It bears no resemblance at all to a genuine charter of Æthelstan; but its vernacular form meant that it was accessible and memorable. Although clearly spurious to our eyes, it certainly had a practical function, as two of its most famous lines, in which King Æthelstan is made to say to the Beverley church, 'Als fre make I the, as hert may thynke, or egh may see', are found quoted in formal chancery proceedings of the 14th century.

Dr Woodman's edition of the *Charters from Northern Archives* will be published in the British Academy's *Anglo-Saxon Charters* series.

More information about the Academy Anglo-Saxon Charters project can be found on its 'Kemble' website, at [www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/](http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/chartwww/)



Figure 1. Beverley Minster wall panel, 15th century, showing King Æthelstan and St John, the 8th-century founder of Beverley. Photo: groenling, flickr.com

### Beverley cartulary

The association with King Æthelstan became all the more important for the Beverley community in the late 14th century. In the spring of 1381, a remarkable feud erupted between Alexander Neville, archbishop of York, and the Beverley chapter. The argument had its roots in Neville's deeds at York, where he had tried to limit the authority of the York clergy. One of his principal opponents at York was a chancery clerk by the name of Richard de Ravenser, who also held a prebend at Beverley. In 1381 Archbishop Neville announced his intention to conduct a visitation of Beverley Minster. This was highly controversial.

On 26 March of the same year, the archbishop entered the Minster and began his visitation. By 5 April the situation was so dire that most of the Beverley clergy had left and the Minster was no longer in a position to provide all of the necessary liturgical services. Archbishop Neville's reaction was unequivocal: he excommunicated those vicars-choral who had walked out. But his most controversial act came when he sent for vicars-choral from his own cathedral church at York in order to carry out the functions of the now excommunicated clergy of Beverley Minster. The Beverley clergy were not idle and harnessed the support of King Richard II (1367-1400) in an attempt to oust Neville from the Minster. Thus on 21 April 1381 a royal official arrived at the archbishop's manor house in Beverley and served him with royal writs and letters which stated

that the king had jurisdiction over Beverley as a royal foundation and therefore called the archbishop to attend the Privy Council. In the event, the archbishop simply ignored the summons and continued as planned with the visitation.

It is very fortunate that we have preserved Archbishop Neville's own register.<sup>3</sup> At one point it contains a copy of one of the very same writs sent by King Richard II to the archbishop. It describes a complaint made by the canons of Beverley against the archbishop, in which they cite King Æthelstan as having richly endowed the Minster. King Richard goes on to urge Archbishop Neville to desist from his visitation since the Minster was 'our and our forefathers' foundation' (... *collegium de nostra et progenitorum nostrorum fundatione existit* ...), the implication being that Archbishop Neville had no jurisdiction over a royal foundation. It is fascinating to find that against the word *fundatione*, the archbishop himself has made a marginal annotation which reads:

Nota quod non est de fundatione Regis set de fundatione Beati Johannis, quondam Archiepiscopi Eboracensis, in qua quidem ecclesia corpus preciosissimi confessoris Sancti Johannis requiescit humatum, prout patet in antiquis registris et libris dicte ecclesie.

Note that it is not about the foundation of a King, but a foundation of St John, once Archbishop of York, in which church the body of the most precious confessor St John lies buried, as is revealed in ancient registers and books of the aforementioned church.

The Beverley clergy were therefore faced by an archbishop of York who claimed jurisdiction over their foundation on the basis that St John, the 8th-century founder of Beverley, had also been the bishop of York. Their reaction was to produce the handsome Beverley cartulary, British Library MS Additional 61901, the earliest extant Beverley cartulary. The Beverley community could not, and did not want to, deny its association with the 8th-century Bishop John – it was this very link that had ensured a measure of their success. What they did instead was to modify and refashion their community's history. Thus various passages in the Beverley cartulary suggest that during the 9th century the Beverley church, along with its books, was entirely destroyed by the Vikings and that it had to be refounded by King Æthelstan in the early 10th century. This leads to an almost awkward balance in the Beverley cartulary between those passages which emphasise the miracles of St John at Beverley and those which describe Æthelstan as the true donor of many of Beverley's rights and possessions. The Beverley community was so successful in its depiction of Æthelstan as donor and founder that the 19th-century editor of Beverley's *Chapter Act Book*<sup>4</sup> considered Beverley a 10th-century foundation, rather than one of the early 8th century.

The threat from Archbishop Neville in the 1380s caused the Beverley community to investigate and refashion their archives and to publish the results in the Beverley cartulary now preserved in the British Library. In doing so, an emphasis on Æthelstan as a *royal* donor became all the more important and thus an updated and expanded copy of the rhyming Middle English charter of Æthelstan found its way into the Beverley cartulary. And this association with Æthelstan and dependence on the rhyming charter are still evident to this day in the Minster, not the least in the 15th-century wall panel (Figure 1) which depicts King Æthelstan handing over a sealed version of the rhyming charter to Bishop John and which has Æthelstan uttering the same two famous lines from the charter that

were quoted in formal chancery proceedings: 'Als fre make I thee, as hert may thynke, or egh may see'.

#### Notes

- 1 *Writ*: a brief, formal statement (often conveying/confirming rights or privileges) made by an Anglo-Saxon king and delivered to a local court.
- 2 *Cartulary*: a manuscript compiled by a religious house containing copies of charters, writs, wills, legal proceedings, in short any kind of documentation which had a bearing on that particular institution's rights. Nevertheless, cartularies were not limited just to these kinds of documents and could also contain texts such as saints' *Lives* or historical chronicles.
- 3 *Register*: a bit like a cartulary, in that it contains copies of documents that were considered important; in this case, documents that were important for Archbishop Neville.
- 4 *Chapter Act Book*: a manuscript which records the proceedings of the Beverley chapter.

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Dr David Woodman is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow. His researches into the archives of York Minster, Durham Cathedral, Beverley Minster and Ripon Minster revealed many manuscript copies of charters that were previously unknown to scholarship. A fuller account of the subject of this article will be published in *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, ed. O. Da Rold and T. Edwards (British Library). Dr Woodman is now working on the chronicle (*Chronicon ex chronicis*) attributed to John of Worcester (d. 1140).

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## The acts of medieval English bishops, illustrated

*The British Academy is publishing a volume of 'Facsimiles of English Episcopal Acta, 1085-1305'. The author, Dr Martin Brett, explains why it is so important to make available images of these administrative documents.*

**I**N 2006 Professor Barrie Dobson FBA, then Chairman of the British Academy's committee on the English Episcopal Acta project, published an article in the *British Academy Review* describing the project's origins, importance and progress.<sup>1</sup> He underlined the importance of the collective expertise of the editors, harnessed through regular meetings supported by the Academy, and how this deepened understanding of documents which do not reveal their full meaning at a first reading. This year the project is publishing a volume that stands outside the main sequence, a collection of facsimiles of 184 charters, out of the two thousand and more which survive as originals. Some photographs of acts, or parts of acts, have been printed in the volumes from the outset, but their format has not often allowed these to be presented at actual size, or ever in great numbers. The new volume includes a larger photographic sample of

episcopal charters than has ever been brought together for any province of the Latin Church in the period.

#### Single sheets

Globally, only some one in five of the surviving acts in the names of English bishops is preserved as an original, though this generalisation conceals wide differences between dioceses. The archives of Canterbury and Durham are of international importance, while the almost equally wealthy cathedrals of York and Winchester have suffered catastrophic losses over the years. Where so many documents are preserved only in later copies, the originals are the very bedrock of any study, and this for several reasons. The most obvious is that the copies are often preserved in cartularies, collections of the title deeds of a religious house which provided easy

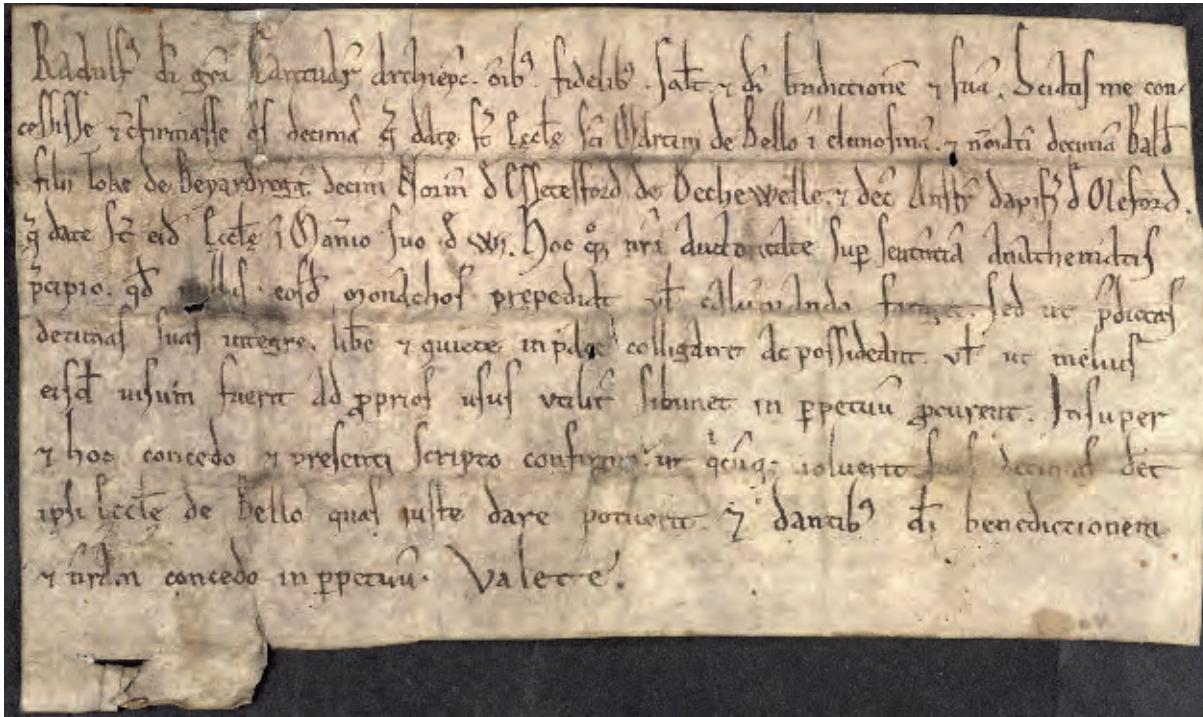


Figure 1. Spurious confirmation of grants of tithes to Battle abbey by Archbishop Ralph of Canterbury, between 1114 and 1122 were it genuine. British Library Harley charter 43 G 18.

access to the substance of its often extensive collection. Such volumes are more likely to survive than the fragile sealed single sheets on which they depended, and were much sought after by early collectors such as Cotton, Bodley or even Sir Thomas Phillipps. These copyists were selective in their interests: many saw little point in transcribing such transient features as long lists of witnesses; some abbreviated or simply misread their exemplar; others copied out of habit the conventional formulations in the address or salutation of their own time rather than of the grant itself. A close comparison of any surviving original with its copy is often the only sure guide to the value of these later compilations.

**Fakes**

More urgently, the sheets themselves offer far more material for analysis than any copy. They can be examined for their script, their *mise-en-page*, their methods of sealing and, when they survive, the seals themselves. There has been a steadily increased understanding as the project has advanced that more of the surviving acts are forgeries than any of us had previously supposed, and their detection depends heavily on the evidence of originals. Concentrated and

expert study of script, particularly by Dr Webber and Michael Gullick, has unmasked a considerable body of such fakes, sometimes among documents which have long been held up as striking monuments of their period.

A convenient example is offered by a charter for Battle abbey in the name of Archbishop Ralph of Canterbury (Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> If we had only a copy, this would probably have escaped detection. A single formula, *ad proprios usus* (for their own uses), alone is unexpected so early. Since there must be an authentic first occurrence of any such phrase, the incurably suspicious might doubt it, but there would be no proof – indeed there would be some danger that the effort to establish a chronology of the formula would become circular. However, there are a large number of forged charters in the Battle archive, and the script in this case is decisive; it is of the last quarter of the 12th century, fifty years or so after its supposed date. The details of the sealing arrangement are also bizarre, suggesting an imaginative if unconvincing effort to produce an archaic effect. This is a later confection designed to defend the abbey’s right to tithes against church courts demanding ever more insistently that such rights required written episcopal confirmation. In earlier years these

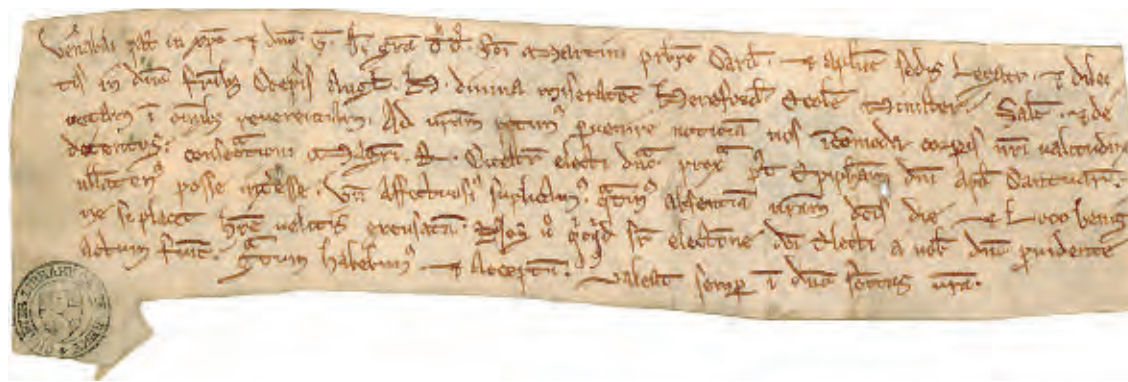


Figure 2. Litterae excusatoriae of Bishop Hugh de Mapenore of Hereford to the legate Guala, December 1217. Canterbury Cathedral archives, DCc/ Chartae antiquae C 110 (1).

formalities had rarely been observed. Such a forgery is inherently of great interest. Here it attests the serious problems long-established houses confronted when challenged by a new generation of skilled advocates trained in the schools of law in Bologna, and increasingly elsewhere too, after 1150. Yet it cannot reveal its significance unless one knows when it was made; purely textual analysis based on a copy would produce only tentative or provisional conclusions.

Such analysis has been the traditional stuff of diplomatic since the *De re diplomatica* of the great Maurist scholar, Jean Mabillon, in 1681. Once this labour is complete, one can then consider the surviving acts in their own right. Such a corpus contributes to many enquiries: a large body of more-or-less exactly dated examples of script is an irreplaceable resource for the palaeographer and for the historical linguist; a body of scribes dedicated to the service of their bishop can be identified with increasing confidence, giving force and clarity to the history of local administrations, and so on.

### Different functions

One approach is less often made explicit, though no one who works with the originals is likely to be unaware of it. The charter as object may cast light on two distinct, even contradictory, aspects of their place in medieval government.

On the one hand, some documents almost always appear only as originals before the appearance of the bishop's registers of correspondence in the course of the 13th century. These are the transitory small change of episcopal government. The narrative sources make clear that bishops, and often others of the clergy, had long conducted a range of transactions: summoning litigants before their court; making a formal excuse for non-attendance at councils or courts; incurring and repaying debts before witnesses; reporting to the king or their colleagues on transactions with others; or appointing proctors to represent them in law suits. In the second half of the 12th century a few examples of such proceedings first begin to appear as written documents in the richer archives. For example, in Figure 2, Bishop Hugh de Mapenore of Hereford excuses himself from attendance at a council summoned by the papal legate Guala in 1217.<sup>3</sup> This letter is a vivid physical illustration of the routine use of writing: the parchment is small, the script plain, the content succinct. One may well suspect that such letters had been written earlier – forms for the celebration of church councils derived from the practice of antiquity provided expressly for them – but it is only after 1150 that we can see them in use in England.

At the opposite extreme, a charter is often at the centre, even the climax, of a piece of public theatre, where the participants gather to acknowledge an agreement or attest a grant before a competent authority, often in the presence of a large body of witnesses. In particular, there is ample evidence that such documents were intended for recitation out loud. The reading at York cathedral of the papal privilege freeing Archbishop Thurstan of York from his profession of obedience to Canterbury in 1121 is the high spot of Hugh the Chanter's *History of the archbishops of York* – but much less momentous matters also needed to be known to a wider audience, many illiterate. It became a standard form in the 13th century for a scribe to open his text with the phrase 'Be it known to all who see or hear these letters', and the fact is much older. Some of this oral

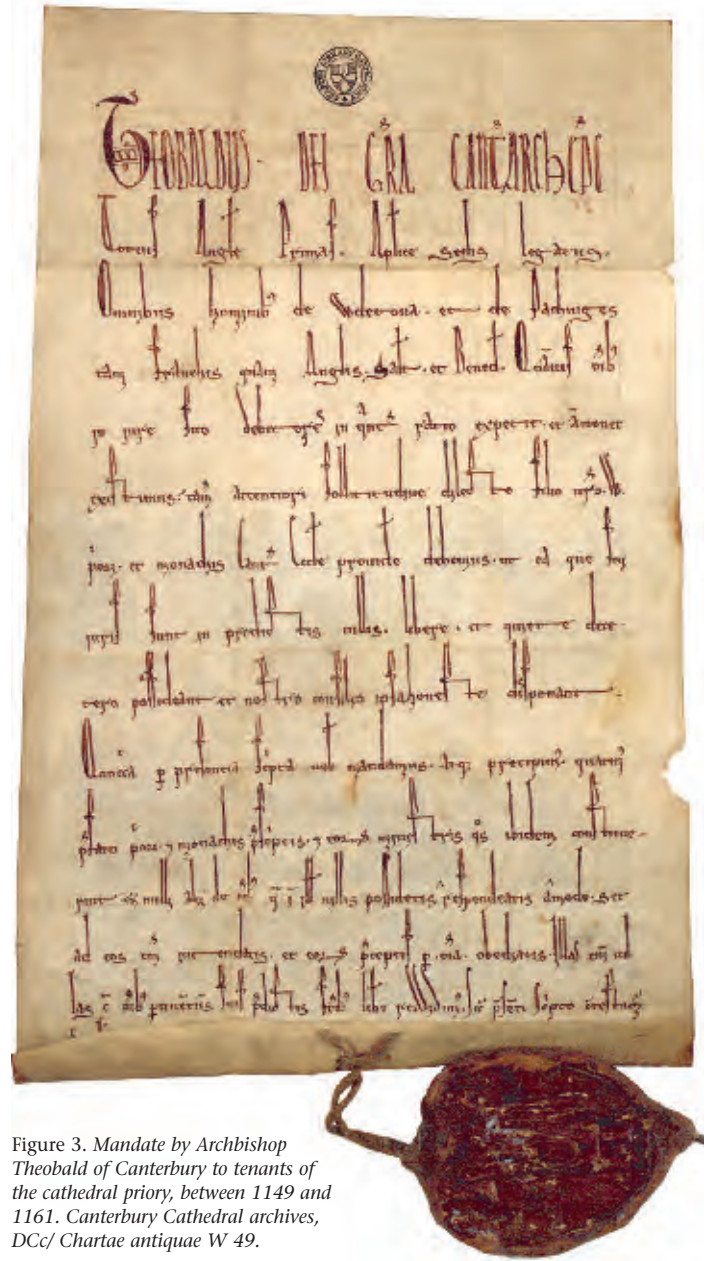


Figure 3. Mandate by Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury to tenants of the cathedral priory, between 1149 and 1161. Canterbury Cathedral archives, DCc/ Chartae antiquae W 49.

context can be recovered in part from the layout of the documents themselves. Neither punctuation nor the use of capital letters in the period bears much relation to modern practice, but most scribes took care to use both. Some common usage is distinctly surprising; 'God' or 'Christ' is hardly ever capitalised, and other proper names most inconsistently, yet 'Seal' or 'Charter' often are. It is easiest to understand the punctuation in particular as a guide to reading aloud. It is even occasionally the case that the meaning depends on these indications of how the text was to be read out. An unusual case is found in one of two originals of a grant by Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester, to Selborne priory in 1238. The scribe originally used a minimum of punctuation. Later a number of tiny vertical lines were added at points where there is a natural break in the sense, as if this was musical notation. The echo of oral delivery may be faint, but it is certainly present.



**Physical aspects**

Most of these more formal acts are recorded on a carefully prepared sheet of vellum or parchment, written by a trained scribe, and authenticated by an impression from the bishop's seal matrix. By the end of the 12th century this might well be a masterpiece of the engraver's art, applied with the aid of a seal press of advanced design.

The physical appearance of the document is often itself a statement about the grantor and sometimes the transaction. Figure 3 shows a straightforward instruction by Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury to the tenants on the lands of the cathedral priory to obey the monks as their lords.<sup>4</sup> In appearance, however, it is a vigorous assertion of the archbishop's dignity. The lay-out is spacious, the elaborate script is imitated from a full-dress papal privilege, the seal (with counterseal) is attached by silk cords. The charter as object lends force to the command it records. Figure 4, though less well-preserved, was once also sealed on cords, rather than the more conventional parchment strip, as the eyelets reveal. It is a grant by Hugh of Balsham of Ely to the prior and canons of Anglesey in 1259.<sup>5</sup> A hundred years later than Theobald's mandate, it yet employs the rich resources of a skilled scribe to underline the solemnity of the bishop's act.

\*

In all these ways the full meaning of original charters of the period can be discerned in their appearance as well as in their content. If the

administrative detritus of the bishop's writing office illustrates the relentless advance of the written record, the solemn acts remind one that the charter long retained qualities which far transcend the mere recitation of the facts it recorded.

**Notes**

- 1 Barrie Dobson, 'English Episcopal Acta', *British Academy Review*, issue 9 (2006).
- 2 This document is edited and discussed in *English Episcopal Acta, 28, Canterbury 1070-1136*, ed. Martin Brett and Joseph A. Gribbin (2004).
- 3 Printed as Plate LXIIIB in *Facsimiles of English Episcopal Acta, 1085-1305*.
- 4 Printed as Plate XIII in *Facsimiles of English Episcopal Acta, 1085-1305*.
- 5 Printed as Plate XCVIII in *Facsimiles of English Episcopal Acta, 1085-1305*.

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Dr Martin Brett is Emeritus Fellow, Robinson College, Cambridge. He is the author of the forthcoming British Academy volume *Facsimiles of English Episcopal Acta, 1085-1305*.

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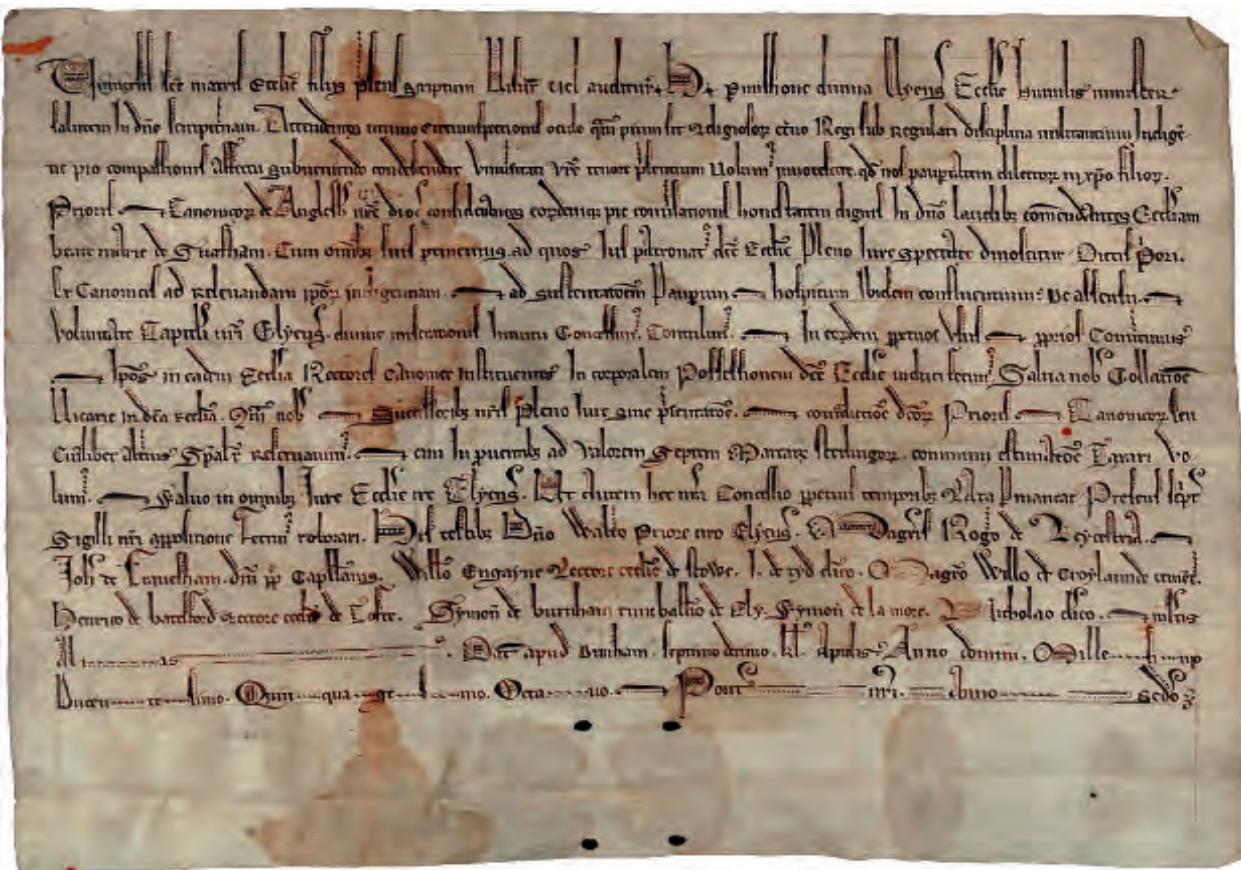


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The Academy's main series of *English Episcopal Acta* volumes has now reached Volume 37. For more on all these titles, see [www.britac.ac.uk/pubs](http://www.britac.ac.uk/pubs)

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Figure 4. Grant by Bishop Hugh of Balsham of Ely to the prior and canons of Anglesey of the church of St Mary at Swaffham, 15 March 1259. The National Archives, PRO (TNA) E326/11108.



# Propaganda in the Mongol 'World History'

The 2010 Aspects of Art Lecture formed part of the British Academy's 'Medieval Week', hosted by the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Professor Robert Hillenbrand FBA discussed an extraordinary medieval manuscript held in Edinburgh University Library.

THE EDINBURGH University Library possesses in the *Jami' al-Tawarikh* (commonly known as the *World History*), datable 1314 and produced in Tabriz in north-west Iran, one of the supreme masterpieces of Persian book painting. Its extreme rarity, its huge size, its lavish illustration and its very early date combine to give it a good claim to be the single most valuable illustrated Islamic manuscript in the world.

The *World History* was produced at the command of Ghazan Khan, the Mongol ruler of Iran, who ordered Rashid al-Din, a Jewish doctor from Western Iran who converted to Islam and had already served successive Mongol rulers as principal vizier, to write it – though one wonders where he found the time; it was probably ghosted. The work represents an intellectual enterprise of the first order, and one unique in the history of the medieval world, covering as it does in its original four volumes (though no complete manuscript has survived) China and India, Mongolia, and Russia and Europe as far west as Ireland. Native informants supplemented by earlier chronicles provided the raw material for its c.2,000 elephant folio text (among the largest illustrated texts of Mongol times), of which the largest surviving portion produced in the lifetime of its compiler is the Edinburgh fragment, 150 folios long; there is a smaller portion of the same copy, 59 folios long, in a London collection. So some 90 per cent of the text is lost.

The Edinburgh portion is of particular interest for several reasons. First, it contains much material from the Old and New Testaments, the Apocrypha and the Midrash, all seen through Muslim eyes (Figure 1); second, it contains the first coherent cycle of



Figure 1. Scenes from the Old Testament. Top: Jonah and the whale. Middle: Moses in the bullrushes. Bottom: Abraham destroys idols (from al-Biruni, *'Chronology of Ancient Nations', as comparison*).

images of the Prophet Muhammad, images that had hitherto been taboo in the Islamic world; and third, its historical coverage is particularly full for the period of the 10th and 11th centuries, and therefore adds much interesting detail to the few extant chronicles for this period. The associated images (70 in all), many of which are beautiful works of art, are full of echoes of Arab, Byzantine, Western and Chinese art.

Thus the manuscript stands at a crossroads of history and art history alike, as the principal surviving illustrated document of the largest continuous land empire that the world has ever seen, stretching from Korea to East Germany and from the Sea of Japan to the Baltic. The multi-confessional flavour of text and images alike reflects these wide horizons, when most of Asia was briefly united under the Pax Mongolica.

### Ghazan Khan

Ghazan Khan, the young, energetic and far-sighted ruler of the Ilkhanid realm, the Persian branch of the huge Mongol empire, commissioned the work shortly before his death in 1304. It was no casual whim, but should be seen within the framework of a whole series of measures aimed at changing public perceptions of the Mongols and fostering their acculturation into Perso-Islamic society. Ghazan felt that it was time to shed the image of the Mongols as an alien and ruthless conquering horde, and to strengthen their long-term commitment to the land that they were ruling. To achieve such aims called for concessions on the part of rulers and ruled alike – and more than that, a fundamental change of attitude on both sides. The moving spirit behind this impetus for change was the young Ilkhan himself, who shortly after acceding to the throne in 1295 took the epoch-making decision to embrace Islam, and who saw to it that the Mongol elite followed suit. In quick succession he promulgated edicts that a mosque and a *hammam* should be built in every village of Iran, the mosque to be paid for from the revenues of the *hammam*, and that all traces of Buddhism (the faith in which he had been raised) should be extirpated from the land. He led this revival of Islamic piety by personal example, paying visits to key Iraqi shrines and shouldering the expenses of their refurbishment.

Ghazan himself could fairly be described as an intellectual, with a working knowledge of many fields of study including natural history, medicine, chemistry and astronomy; he ordered an observatory to be built in Tabriz with a school for secular sciences attached to it. He is also credited in the chronicles with some knowledge of a remarkable range of languages which themselves spanned most of the territories of the Mongol empire: Chinese, Mongolian, Tibetan, Kashmiri, Hindi, Persian, Arabic and Frankish; it is unclear whether the last of these was French or Latin. He was an acknowledged expert in the history of his own people, and indeed Rashid al-Din specifically notes that he received much of the information for the first volume of his *World History*, namely the one devoted to Mongol history, from Ghazan himself. The extensive panorama of history and geography evoked by the *World History* certainly owes much to the vision and the vaulting ambition of this remarkable monarch.

### Propaganda

I want to argue in this paper that among the many new departures which the *World History* of Rashid al-Din represents was a propaganda dimension. Manuscripts had not hitherto served such purposes. Nor was this strange. Each manuscript is unique. Manuscripts are aimed at a very limited readership – and reading is essentially a private activity. Certainly public readings were common in the medieval Islamic world, but these were for an academic audience; and erudition, not propaganda, was the aim.

How, then, was the *World History* any different? First, they were copied *en masse*. Second, they were intended for free public display. Third, they were exceptionally large. Fourth, their content was truly global in its reach. Fifth, they were lavishly illustrated with big paintings. And I hope to show that it is principally through the medium of these paintings that the propaganda dimension operated.

### Mass copying, for public display

First, then, the issue of copying. The text was planned from the outset to be produced in multiple identical versions on as near to an industrial scale as medieval production

methods – as well as the sheer scale and expense of the enterprise – would permit. And although the reproduction of texts was a profit-oriented business in this society, no charge to users was levied – which suggests that something very unusual was going on here.

These multiple free copies were produced every six months in the two literary languages of the eastern Islamic world, namely Persian and Arabic. Rashid al-Din's endowment deed stipulated that a copy should be sent (presumably in whatever language was appropriate) to the major cities of Ilkhanid realm, whose fluctuating boundaries extended over this period from Syria in the west to the Black Sea, the Caucasus and Central Asia in the north and to modern Pakistan in the east. They were to be displayed, so Rashid al-Din's deed runs, in mosques and *madradas*, in other words in public venues, and were to be made available to all comers. Thus no specific class of readers was identified, and the prevalence of numerous illustrations meant that the manuscripts could reach the illiterate as well as the literate.

The decision to target the major cities meant that in fairly short order (say ten years) the majority of the urban population under Ilkhanid rule could have had access to these manuscripts, and in the longer term most city-dwellers in the realm. One may deduce that there was never any intention to reach those who lived in villages.

### Size

A third factor which distinguishes the *World History* from earlier secular manuscripts is quite simple: its huge size. In their present severely trimmed state, little more remains of the original page than the multi-framed text block, which includes illustrations, and measures 36.5 by 25.5 cm. That was unprecedented at the time. But it gives a misleading impression of the size of the original manuscript, for the aesthetic of the time dictated that the text block should be set within very substantial upper, lower and outer margins so that the reader's attention would immediately focus on it. The original size was probably not less than 50 by 36 cm per page, so that when the bound manuscript was open at a double-page spread it probably measured something over

a metre across and over one-third of a metre high. This, then, was comparable to the elephant folio which is the largest standard size in Western book production. It was cumbersome to a degree, hernia-inducing and quite unsuited to ordinary reading, and it required a lectern or some similar raised support if it were to see regular use.

### Global content

Fourthly, the *World History* broke new ground in its content, which was nothing short of revolutionary. That content responded to Mongol experiences, needs and ambitions, rather than recycling the familiar formulae of Islamic universal histories, with their unselfconscious bias towards a Muslim-centred view of the world. Rashid al-Din's *World History*, by contrast, lives up to its name. He was well informed about China, and he knew that there were no snakes in Ireland. His is by far the most comprehensive history written anywhere in the pre-modern world, and that makes it an astonishing achievement.

There is no intention here to claim that its coverage is either balanced or complete. Indeed, the decision to devote one entire volume out of a total of four to the history of the Mongols announced right from the outset that there is frank bias at work. After all, the history of the Mongols was not only heavily dependent on oral tradition, but also reached back only a few generations before entering a world of legend and myth. So to spin out its exiguous material into a complete volume implied a corresponding reduction in other sections of the *World History*. Moreover, to put the history of the Mongols first, in pole position, as the umbrella under which the rest of the world's history can unfold, is also a move fraught with political significance. It underlines the paramount nature of Mongol rule in the contemporary world; and further, it seeks to project that paramount status back into the past, and thereby to rewrite history.

Although the role of the Mongols in the overall schema of the *World History* is unduly privileged, the sheer scope of the enterprise remains unprecedented. Its surviving portions treat the history of China

and of India, and of the Turks, the Franks and the Jews, admittedly all in condensed form, as well as covering in uneven detail the history of the Islamic world. This interest in the wider world, whatever its deficiencies in factual information, reflects the direct personal experience which the Mongols had accumulated about the vast Eurasian world, and their desire to get to know their new dominions better, as well as the areas adjoining them. Thus Rashid al-Din's *World History* is an outgrowth from, and a testament to, the greatest continuous land empire in the history of mankind. The *World History* reflects that colossal achievement, and without needing to drive the point home, its very structure reminds its readers of the fact of that empire. The various sub-sections could indeed be seen as an attempt to stake a Mongol claim to past cultures, whether Arab or Persian, Jewish or Christian, Indian or Chinese, Turkish or Frankish. And here the unity of style and presentation in the illustrations could play its part, especially in all details of military type, which are presented in an instantly recognisable and exclusively Mongol idiom (Figure 2). Thus, whatever the historical or geographical context, Mongols are everywhere and dominate the past.

### Lavish illustration

The fifth unusual aspect of the *World History* was the significant role allotted to illustration, even though the content of those illustrations was strikingly limited and repetitive. In the Edinburgh fragment there are 70 illustrations unevenly divided across

the 150 surviving folios of the manuscript in its present state, an average of one illustration for every two folios or so. This means that the paintings were not merely supplementary, as it were random grace notes for the text, but were intended from the outset to be integrated with it so that the pictures and the narrative are interdependent, or alternatively tell different stories. Moreover, the huge size of the page meant that the illustrations, even though for the most part they took the form of a narrow strip extending for the full width of the text block, would still have a substantial painted surface. They were thus capable of accommodating quite complex compositions.

This increased size of the paintings made it possible for several people at once to study the paintings, just as the huge size of the text block allowed several people to read the text simultaneously. Studying this manuscript in some provincial city could therefore become a group activity and could be expected to generate discussion and debate. At all events, it opened the door to a primitive kind of propaganda.

The desire to use the images for propaganda purposes – at any rate to carry a message over and above the requirements of illustrating a given event in the narrative – involved whoever was responsible for choosing the subjects for illustration (let us call him the project manager) in concentrating that visual material into a few themes. Repetition, after all, was a key element in the success of this strategy. The



Figure 2. Alexander the Great enters the Land of Gloom.

opportunity cost of restricting the subject matter of the illustrations in this way was to renounce the option of using the paintings to reflect the full richness of the narrative, and thus to leave many unique and fascinating events unillustrated.

It must be conceded too that another factor may have been at work here – the perennial demand for speed, to meet unforbearing production deadlines that were a necessary part of the whole copying enterprise. But the two factors of propaganda intent and keeping to deadlines, far from being mutually exclusive, actually point in the same direction – for the emphasis on key themes which have a propaganda dimension ensured that the painters themselves could execute at greater speed the limited range of subject matter, and thus could more easily keep to the tight timescale set for the whole project.

**Three themes**

In looking more closely at the illustrations of the *World History* and at what they say, I shall confine my remarks to the Edinburgh portion. I propose to deal with three major themes as expressed in its illustrations. Those themes may be defined broadly as violence, authority and piety. Each of them, I would argue, carries a simple message that requires no literacy at all to understand and that is moreover driven home by sheer repetition. The cumulative impact of a succession of related images is not to be underestimated. All that the viewer needs to do is to turn the pages.

It is no part of my argument that the images illustrating these three themes served exclusively propaganda purposes. Each had its appropriate place within the general narrative and functioned at the primary level as an illustration of a specific episode. But simultaneously they discharged a generic as well as a specific function in that they contributed to what might be termed the hidden agenda of this great government-generated project. The stress on violence and on authority in particular trumps everything else, as if history were no more than this.

**Violence**

There can be no doubt that the overriding visual impact of these paintings is of an unremittingly violent and brutal world. Of the 70 paintings in the Edinburgh fragment, 35 – exactly half the total – deal with battles,

sieges, punishment or violent death. So far as its paintings are concerned, this is quite simply a book drenched in blood. That is an awesome and uncomfortable finding. At one stage there are 54 sides of richly illustrated text in which *all* the paintings,



Figure 3. Scenes of violence. Top: Abraham and Nimrud. Middle: Rustam shoots Saghad. Bottom: Samson brings down the temple of Dagon.

with only two exceptions, are about violence.

Let me recall the lethal brevity of one Persian historian describing the Mongol conquest: *'amadand, kandand, sukhtand, kushtand, bardand, raftand'* – 'they came, they uprooted, they burned, they slaughtered, they plundered, they departed'.

I will begin with punishment and violent death. Even events of the distant past are given a raw contemporary edge, as in (Figure 3) the Mongol catapult that precipitates Abraham into the flames, Rustom's Mongol compound bow whose arrow pins a traitor to a tree, or the bloody shambles as a turbaned Samson brings down the temple of Dagon, where the corpses heaped high would revive memories of Mongol holocausts among older viewers. Other unfortunates are drowned or swallowed up in earthquakes. In Figure 4, cowering captives are unceremoniously hauled by their beards towards a blazing fire, kneeling prisoners await the executioner's sword, and St George, already tortured, is pulled half-naked before the king with a chain round his neck. Courtiers look on impassively as a wretch in the stocks, his teeth bared, watches his own arm being methodically amputated, while another victim thrashes wildly on the floor while the executioner kneels on the small of his back, yanking up his head and cutting his throat. In almost every case an enthroned monarch presides over the bloodshed, whether actual or imminent. Each of these scenes depicts an episode in the text, but running through them all is an unmistakable moral for every viewer to draw: it doesn't pay to oppose or alienate the monarch. Bad things happen if you do. Collectively these images of punishment encourage unquestioning submission to the ruling authority.

All the other violent images have to do with battle, either actual or imminent, apart from four which depict sieges (Figure 5). All these paintings, as I noted earlier, have an instantly recognisable Mongol air. This extends well beyond facial characteristics to embrace headgear, clothing, footwear, armour, weapons and equipment. Even their mounts are depicted as hardy Mongol ponies. To Iranians traumatised over a



Figure 4. *Scenes of punishment. Top: Early converts to Islam being tortured. Middle: Zahhak and a prisoner. Bottom: Prisoner led before monarch.*

period of three generations by invasions, sieges and massacres at the hands of Mongol hordes, and currently enduring government by an alien Mongol elite, this presentation of the past, including their own past, embodied in Mongol form, would have operated as a kind of brainwashing. And the concomitant emphasis on violence and

bloodshed could scarcely fail to recall the havoc wrought in Iran all too recently by people looking just like these soldiers. These scenes of conflict, then, like those of punishment, would have had a menacing if subliminal subtext of the retribution that awaited any rebellion by Persians against Mongol rule. These threatening images,



Figure 5. Scenes of warfare. Top: City besieged. Middle: Hand to hand combat with a mace. Bottom: Horseman attacks an elephant.

their impact intensified by relentless repetition, glorify brute force. That force has a Mongol face. And it is found in a book produced by government edict. As one leafs through its pages, one realises that in

simplistic terms it presents history as being about war, and the pity of war; but there is little poetry in the pity. If this is not propaganda, it is something very similar; and it is plainly repressive in intent.

### Authority

The second major theme, authority, is also expressed in a consistent and notably repetitive way. The pictorial language is spare and formulaic. The focus of the image is always the ruler himself, surrounded by empty space and isolated on a throne that usually floats above the ground line and is furnished with bolster and footstool (Figure 6). It raises him above his surrounding bodyguards and courtiers, most of whom are marked out as Mongols by their headgear. Their grouping into twos, threes and fours, usually on either side of him, underlines both their subordinate role and their lack of individuality. Their body language of inclined heads, eyes cast down or fixed attentively on their lord and master, of crossed hands, of arms held straight across the chest or gripped by the other hand, speaks of disciplined obedience. He alone is seated in comfort and ostentatious magnificence; they, on the other hand, stand, kneel or sit on a simple low stool. Thus clear visual distinctions operate to ensure that the ruler takes pride of place. His throne is usually a bright scarlet, a tone that suggests Chinese lacquer-work, while its lobed outlines, foliate feet and dragon finials as well as the imbricated waves, and the lotus and peony decoration of its upholstery, all intensify its Chinese character. Once again, the reference to the East Asian origin of the Mongols is unmissable even though none of these monarchs is a Mongol. The ruler's chest is often ornamented with a mandarin square, and he like some of his courtiers sometimes follows the Chinese fashion of long sleeves.

The accumulation of these details excludes any possibility of identifying the monarch as a Persian; they underline his East Asian character and thereby stress his remoteness from his Persian subjects. These remarks apply with almost equal force to the images of pre-Islamic Persian shahs; these too bear the same marks of East Asian character, and here too the attendants are obviously Mongol in appearance and dress. These monarchs constitute a roll-call of the rulers who people the *Shahnama*, the Persian 'Book of Kings': Hushang, Tahmuras, Jamshid, Zahhak, Minuchihr, Luhrasp, Gushtasp, Kaika'us, Iskandar and Hurmuzd. Even the greatest of the *Shahnama* heroes,



Figure 6. Depictions of rulers. Left: Ruler dictates to scribe. Right: Ruler listens to old man.



Figure 7. Depictions of Persian officials. Left: Ruler with Rustam. Right: Ruler accepts a bow.



Figure 8. More informal scenes. Left: Ruler with falconer. Right: Ruler with harpist.

Rustam, makes two guest appearances. Thus the chronological skeleton of the *Shahnameh* is incorporated, admittedly in prose, into the *World History*. Curiously enough, these are the earliest dated *Shahnameh* images in Persian painting, and it is sobering to reflect just how Mongolised they are. So even when lip service was paid to this most nationalistic of books, its Persian character was suppressed.

The general exception to this Far Eastern ambience is the presence of Persian officials, an acknowledgement of their crucial role in the daily business of government, and a tacit reminder that the Mongols could not do without them, from Rashid al-Din himself downwards. They are usually seated, sometimes engaged in taking down notes or dictation, and their dress – for example, the turban – distinguishes them from the

Mongol courtiers. Occasionally the ethnic differences are deliberately stressed (Figure 7).

From time to time an air of informality sidles into these stereotypical icons of rulership. For example, in Figure 8 the monarch is attended by a falconer holding a raptor; or he takes a cup from a salver proffered by a kneeling servant, while



further back a girl with hennaed hands strums her harp. But for the most part the atmosphere is formal and serious, though it is significantly more relaxed and lifelike than the standard royal enthronement of 13th-century date, with its unblinking frontality. Thus the seated pose is redolent of comfort rather than stateliness, with one leg stretched out, dangling or tucked in. Moreover, the ruler consistently engages with those around him, tilting his head, leaning forward or making eye contact. Only once (Figure 9) is he depicted in formal audience mode, looking blandly outwards with seated courtiers ranged in groups on either side, like a council in session. He always wears a version of the so-called

Saljuq or tricorne crown, and above the scene hovers a swathe of material pinked out with loops, ribbons and gold-embroidered bands. It is not clear whether this is intended to represent a rolled-up curtain, a canopy or even a tent, though the latter would correspond most closely to literary accounts of the peripatetic Saljuq court. A curiosity in Figure 10 is the crass misunderstanding of the ancient Persian tradition of the hanging crown as a symbol of the absent king, which in this image of the Saljuq monarch Berkyaruq, who is already crowned, floats uncomfortably and redundantly above him.

If the scenes of battle and violence transmit, alongside and so to speak beneath their

immediate narrative *raison d'être*, a sense of the raw terror generated by the Mongols, the 19 enthronement scenes, which account for more than 27 per cent of the paintings in the Edinburgh fragment, project an image of spare, solemn, dignified grandeur. The ruler, whose person and ambience are distinctively East Asian in appearance, carries the appurtenances of kingship – crown, throne, canopy – lightly. But his authority is unassailable, and he presides over a largely Mongol court in which Persian officials are demoted to a lowly and distinctly unmilitary role. The Mongol courtiers carry weapons – bows, swords, maces – but the Iranians never do. The subliminal, propagandist message here seems to be that the future of Iran, like its past, is in the hands of non-Iranians and is set to continue that way. But the ruler is presented as a man who, while touched by the charisma of kingship, and capable of inflicting fearsome punishment, nevertheless also interacts with those at his court and listens to his counsellors.

### Public piety

I come now to my third theme, public piety. Here too the images, ten in all, are concentrated in a single section of the text, which extends for 32 sides. I refer to the images connected with the early career of the Prophet Muhammad rather than those which deal with the Old and New Testaments. One of the major alienating factors of the Mongol invasions was that they were not only sudden, calamitous and of unexampled ferocity, but that the invaders were not Muslims and showed no respect for or understanding of the Islamic faith. Chinggis Khan famously stabled his horses in the Great Mosque of Bukhara. His men came as it were from Mars, and that of course made them still more terrifying. And when the Mongols established themselves as the rulers of Iran, their religious practices did not endear them to their subjects. They themselves were animists or Buddhists, and they promoted Jews and Christians to high-ranking positions in the government in the face of Muslim resentment. All this could not fail to drive a wedge between rulers and ruled. The conversion of Ghazan, the supreme ruler, and with him the Mongol elite, in 1295 changed all this. One of several



Figure 9. Ruler depicted frontally.



Figure 10. Ruler with hanging crown.

possible interpretations of this epoch-making event is that it was intended as an olive branch offered by the Mongols to their subjects. But this mass conversion, which was quickly followed by a violent persecution of the Buddhists in Iran, did not mean that the members of the Mongol elite rapidly familiarised themselves with a faith that already had a complex and turbulent history of over 700 years in Iran. The constant successive confessional shifts of the Mongol ruler Oljeitu (reigned 1304-17), who was by turns Christian, animist, Buddhist, Sunni Muslim, Shi'ite Muslim and eventually – perhaps to be on the safe side – ended his days as a Sunni, reflects this unease with traditional Islamic norms. And it was this Islamic Vicar of Bray who was on the throne when our manuscript was copied.

What light does the situation I have just sketched shed on the cycle of paintings in the *World History* that illustrate the life of the Prophet Muhammad? Those images are not only the most detailed visual account of Muhammad's life that had been produced within the Islamic world for some 700 years; they are all but the first account. In fact the very first, also produced in Mongol Iran, was a mere eight years earlier and its five paintings, with subject matter quite different from that of the *World History*, are to be found in al-Biruni's *Chronology of Ancient Nations* (another key Islamic illustrated manuscript now in Edinburgh). Put plainly, the Mongols shattered a powerful and very longstanding taboo in creating these pictures. It is almost impossible to imagine that a patron raised in the Muslim faith could have ordered them – though it was a different story once that taboo had been breached. It was precisely Mongol ignorance of, or indifference to, Muslim norms that made these pictures possible. Various explanations for this portentous move could be proposed – for example, that these images are teaching aids for newly converted Mongols, or that they are intended in a purely historical (rather than theological) spirit appropriate to the thrust of the work as a whole, or that the Mongol experience of Christianity and Buddhism, both of them faiths with a long tradition of using religious images, led naturally to a demand for similar images for the faith to which the



Figure 11. *Scenes from the life of Muhammad*. Top: *Muhammad meets Gabriel*. Middle: *Muhammad and Bahira*. Bottom: *Birth of Muhammad*.

Mongols had converted. But one might also consider these unprecedented images, some of which recycle such Christian themes as the Annunciation or the Baptism in unexpected ways (Figure 11), as a very

public profession of the Mongols' commitment to their newly adopted faith. That the means they chose for the purpose may have offended Muslim sensibilities would have been an unfortunate irony.

But there can be no question that part of the aim of these pictures was to express reverence for Muhammad – hence the frequent presence of angels in these scenes, a clear signal that he enjoys God's favour. Like the inclusion of *Shahnama* material or the extra emphasis placed on Persian history, then, this foray into Islamic religious subject matter could be interpreted as part of a programme of gradual acculturation. By that reckoning, part of the official strategy behind the *World History* was to win over the hearts and minds of as many Persians as possible.

### Conclusion

From early Islamic times, Muslim rulers had experimented with various forms of propaganda, including coins, clothing and monumental inscriptions. Within that general context, the decision to use huge books in multiple copies and in two languages, and to put them on public display in the major cities of the realm free of charge, must be hailed as an impressive example of lateral thinking. At a stroke it propelled the illustrated book from the private to the public realm. The premier target was an educated provincial audience: the intelligentsia and opinion-makers across

the land. But crucially, the project also catered for a simpler and illiterate audience, and used the big illustrations in these manuscripts as a means to that end. The three themes that I have identified – violence, authority, and piety – and the pictures that express them, speak with various voices. Some go for the jugular and are frankly terrifying. Others seek to persuade. So there is both carrot and stick. And these three themes account for the vast majority (61 out of 70, or 87 per cent) of the paintings in the Edinburgh manuscript, despite the endless opportunities offered by the text for all kinds of subject matter. This in itself is food for thought. Quite apart from the overall project of presenting history through a Mongol lens, the intention was probably to send several messages at once – the irresistible might of the Mongol war machine; the permanent nature of Mongol power; and the Mongol commitment to acculturation, which implied building bridges with their Persian subjects. Not one of these messages got in the way of the others. And they all work, both because they are simple and because they are frequently repeated. Thus between them the Mongol ruler and his Judaeo-Muslim vizier had dreamed up a radically

new use for manuscript illustration. Their gigantic picture book served, among other purposes, as a flexible vehicle for quite sophisticated propaganda. And given that this was in an age that had no concept of newspapers or radio, television or the internet, that is an achievement worth saluting.

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Robert Hillenbrand is currently Professor Emeritus of History of Art at the University of Edinburgh, and is both a Fellow of the British Academy and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. His scholarly interests focus on Islamic architecture, painting and iconography with particular reference to Iran and to Umayyad Syria. His 'Aspects of Art' Lecture, on 'The Past as Propaganda: The Mongol "World History"', was delivered on 18 November 2010. An audio recording of the lecture can be found via [www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary](http://www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary)

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# Portable Christianity: Relics in the Medieval West (c.700–1200)

Professor Julia M.H. Smith

*summarises the arguments she presented in her 2010 Raleigh Lecture.*

**I**N THE LATER Middle Ages, Boccaccio and Chaucer parodied the cult of relics in medieval Christianity. At the Reformation, Calvin poured venomous ridicule on these ‘superstitious’ practices. Many contemporary Catholic churches in the western world have quietly tidied away their collections of medieval and early modern reliquaries, embarrassed by the detritus of their pre-Enlightenment past. The invitation to deliver the 2010 Raleigh Lecture as part of the Medieval Week gave me the opportunity to re-think two questions: What were relics? And why and how did they make sense to the men and women of the Middle Ages? Underlying them is a fundamental issue central to several world religions, how belief relates to materiality.

## A new perspective

Hitherto, scholars have generally approached relics from one of two perspectives. They have either had recourse to the comments of medieval men whose familiarity with many centuries of theological, legal and literary traditions enabled them to critique, praise, elucidate and, above all, define and circumscribe what relics were from the perspective of the ecclesiastical establishment. Alternatively, they have taken their cue from the glittering reliquaries which abound in museums, and have used these masterpieces to appreciate their aesthetic qualities and infer the cultural values of their contents. The silver gilt and jewelled head of St Eustace, originally from Basel but now in the British Museum, is a case in point. It speaks to us of the goldsmith’s craft around 1200, and of medieval traditions of commemorating ancient saintly persons in monumental form.

My approach differed. Drawing on a huge corpus of medieval evidence for the contents dozens of reliquaries, such as St Eustace’s head, I adopted an ‘object-based’ approach. I placed relics’ material nature – stones, lumps of dried soil, sticks, scraps of fabric, splinters of wood, locks of hair, teeth, pieces of bone and the like, all of which derived from pilgrimages to saints’ shrines or to the Holy Land – at the centre of my enquiry. And I drew on recent cross-cultural work by anthropologists and scholars of religion to make sense of these tiny commonplace items. By resisting the post-Enlightenment impulse to separate belief from practice, I presented them as markers of deep-seated cultural reflexes whose

effectiveness has been obscured by exclusive focus on learned discourse or by excessive reliance on reductive functionalism.

## Essential qualities

In brief, I argued that all relics shared three essential qualities. They were fragments of a larger whole, detached portions that combined tangibility with incompleteness. Moreover, their partial nature robbed them of self-evident identity, leaving them implicitly important yet indeterminate and unspecific. Most importantly of all, they were all highly portable, easy to transport over long distances in pockets and saddle-bags. As portable objects, they circulated within medieval society in the same ways as other movable possessions did, by gift, inheritance, theft, sale, and donation, flowing through established networks of communication and transmission. I then posited that in their very tangibility and tiny size, these objects mediated so successfully between the mundane and the sacred because they bridged the chasms of time and place which separated Christians from the world of Bible stories, martyrdoms and the long-dead founding fathers and mothers of their own communities.

## Frame of reference

An obscure 12th-century incident illustrates my argument. It concerned a Christian woman desperate to help her Jewish neighbour, whose son was very ill. The Christian woman produced a pebble and promised that if it was steeped in water, the resulting drink would cure the child. But the mother refused. Because the stone came from the Holy Sepulchre, the site of Christ’s burial and resurrection, its Christian owner was sure of its redemptive, healing qualities. But from the Jewish perspective, anything from any grave was polluted by contact with a corpse, and this stone most of all epitomised everything that separated Jews from Christians. Rabbis used this tale of exemplary maternal piety to try to dissuade later generations of Jews from compromising their own identity in the towns of medieval Germany where Jews

and Christians lived, worked and raised their children side by side. I used it in my lecture for two reasons. First, it enabled me to dismiss the widespread assumption that ‘relics’ are simply the bones of saints. Secondly, it gave me the opportunity to demonstrate how much significance a little stone can have – but also to emphasise that



Figure 1. Reliquary head of St Eustace. Photo: courtesy British Museum.

it only 'works' within an implicitly agreed frame of cultural values and religious reference.

### Exhibition

My remarks had a much more general purpose than merely offering a new perspective on a familiar medieval theme. As the exhibition which opens in the British Museum on 23 June 2011 with the title 'Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics and Devotion in Medieval Europe' will amply demonstrate, relics continue to fascinate in this secular, post-modern age. Along with over one hundred other exhibits from museums around the world, the reliquary head of St Eustace will be on display. The fragments of bone, wood and fabric that it once contained do survive (but are now back in Basel): they

invite reflection upon the paradox of materiality and belief, and give pause for thought about the distinction between the sacred and the secular. As visitors return from the exhibition galleries into the Museum's halls filled with treasures from so many other cultures, times, and places, they will surely be prompted to think about what medieval Christianity did, or did not, have in common with other cultures, and why its heritage still matters in the 21st century. My Raleigh Lecture was intended as a contribution to that enterprise.

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Julia M.H. Smith is Edwards Professor of Medieval History at the University of Glasgow. Her Raleigh Lecture on History was delivered in Edinburgh on 15 November 2010, as part of the British Academy Medieval Week.

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## The stone sculptures of Anglo-Saxon England

*The publication of the 'Cheshire and Lancashire' volume of the British Academy's 'Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture' brings this important series closer to completion. The Corpus has significantly increased the number of known Anglo-Saxon monuments. The General Editor, Professor Rosemary Cramp FBA, explains how the Corpus volumes have encouraged debate and set in motion new ways of assessing these sculptures. Then Professor Richard N. Bailey explains the significance of one particular stone – the Bidston hogback – featured in his 'Cheshire and Lancashire' volume.*

ANGLO-SAXON stone sculptures are often now seen as possessing a fluidity of meaning and context, but the discussion of possible reasons for their construction and location, how they functioned in their time, their meaning to contemporary and later viewers remain live research questions.

### Stone crosses

Stone crosses of the 7th to 11th centuries are a form of Christian monument unique to Britain and Ireland, and the achievement in their production was huge – particularly in the 7th to 9th centuries. Anglo-Saxon art had been Picasso-like in its fragmentation of the human form and reformation into puzzling combinations of human and bird or animal elements, and this was reflected mainly on personal and portable objects in fine metalwork. As a migratory people the Anglo-Saxons had no monumental art, but within three generations of their acceptance of Christianity they had produced sculptures with classical and elegant figures combined

with inventive and varied animal vegetable and abstract ornament, unsurpassed anywhere in the western world of their time.

Although both simple wooden and elaborate metal crosses may have served as inspiration for stone high crosses it is most likely that it was the introduction of stone architecture (with the accompanying masonry skills), at some 7th-century ecclesiastical sites, that inspired these wood-using people to create elaborate stone monuments. The importation of books, reliquaries, ivories and icons to enhance the new churches provided new artistic models, and travel to the continent opened the eyes of some of the clerics to the legacy of the Roman world in their homeland. Roman monuments as well as buildings may have influenced these early carvers although, unlike on many Roman monuments, lay individuals were not depicted until the 9th century.

The functions of Anglo-Saxon crosses as field monuments were various, as foci for prayer and devotion, and indeed for theo-



Figure 1. Shaft of a stone cross at Bewcastle, Cumbria. Photo: Rosemary Cramp, copyright Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture.

logical instruction and conversion, and even, as has been suggested more recently, some could have played a part in the liturgy of the church. Many were commemorative, as their inscriptions show, and some, even with religious figures, have been seen as providing a statement of territorial power or status for those who raised them. Support for one function does not rule out another, but the siting of high crosses could be indicative. It is reasonable to assume that resources to design and execute elaborately carved monuments lay, at that period, in the monasteries, but the sites at which they were raised were not necessarily monastic.

Many of the finest of the 7th-8th century crosses were found in liminal positions where they could make a statement: Bewcastle (Figure 1) and Ruthwell on the border with the Britons, Abercon and Aberlady on the border with the Picts, and the Peak District crosses on the border between Mercia and Northumbria.

### Regional styles

Now that the *Corpus* publication is complete for the sculptures from the ancient

kingdoms of Northumbria and Wessex, it is possible to determine different regional and chronological styles and also to appreciate how Anglo-Saxon carvers developed their own iconography, often prompted by texts rather than imported images.

The discovery of paint on sculptures in the surveys of most regions, has reinforced the links with metalwork, particularly on crosses which are not decorated with figures. It is of interest to note also how clearly the cultural divide between the north and south in the 10th and 11th century has been illustrated in the *Corpus* publications. The artistic talents in the south at that period were directed to architectural sculptures produced from major centres, whilst funerary monuments were more mass-produced and plain, with recumbent grave slabs predominating. These, as the Lincolnshire volume has illustrated, extend into eastern counties where painstaking field-work has revealed how many must have been produced particularly from the Barnack quarries.

In the north, as the Yorkshire and Cheshire and Lancashire volumes demonstrate, the

new Scandinavian overlords and settlers were converted to (and possibly by) the high crosses in their new territories, but quickly adapted them to Scandinavian taste in ornament and figural scenes. They retained crosses as their main funerary monuments, but these were smaller and more crudely carved in local workshops. They also confidently presented secular figures on the crosses and introduced new forms of monument, such as the hogbacks. Richard Bailey discusses one example from his new *Corpus* volume on *Cheshire and Lancashire*.

In the British Academy Medieval Week session on 'Monuments in motion', held on 15 November 2010, Dr Barbara Crawford delivered a presentation by Professor Rosemary Cramp FBA on Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture, and then in her own right spoke about Anglo-Scandinavian hogbacks. An audio recording can be found via [www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary](http://www.britac.ac.uk/medialibrary)

Figure 2. *The Bidston hogback. Photo: Ross Trench-Jellicoe, copyright Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture.*

### Professor Bailey discusses the Bidston hogback

The *Cheshire and Lancashire* volume well illustrates the significance of these carvings for our understanding of early medieval Britain – particularly for those areas where documentary evidence is thin or non-existent. Long ignored as a source of information, these sculptures provide a vital index of cultural and political links at regional and local level because, unlike the more mobile arts of metalwork and manuscript illumination, the carvings were produced at the sites where they now stand. This security of provenance enables us, for example, to recognise the importance, and comparative wealth, of the Lune valley in the 9th century with its string of ambitious carvings emerging from sites like Heysham,



Lancaster, Halton, Hornby and Gressingham. Similarly it is only through the complex figural art of the crosses at Sandbach in Cheshire that we know that northern Mercia was fully conversant with Carolingian iconographic themes whose existence is otherwise not attested in Anglo-Saxon England.

One recently discovered sculpture characterises the kinds of information which can be wrung from even the most unpromising of these carvings (Figure 2). It comes from Bidston, near Birkenhead on the Wirral peninsula, and was discovered in the 1990s, lurking in a rockery at the former vicarage. Measuring 47 cm long and 26 cm

high, it carries decoration on both of its main faces. A large open-jawed beast with raised paw and powerful shoulders dominates both ends of the stone, knotwork issuing from the tongue of the animal on the right and returning to join its lower jaw. On the better-preserved face the lower part of the stone carries three inter-linked triquetra whilst, in equivalent position on the other side, there is some form of scrollwork. That worn face also carries, at the bottom of the stone, traces of the rear legs of the flanking animals.

The carving can be readily identified as a hogback, a Viking-age form of funereal monument whose shape is based on that of a contemporary building with its curved roofline and bombé ground plan. This type of memorial was developed by the Hiberno-Scandinavian elite of northern England in the first half of the 10th century, and represents a secular adaptation of the solid building-shaped shrines of pre-Viking England such as the so-called Hedda's tomb in Peterborough Cathedral. The striking large end-beasts may have acquired new symbolism for their Viking-age patrons, but ultimately derive from the guardian animals which decorate the ridges of metal shrines of earlier Insular art. Now that we have a complete *Corpus* coverage for the English north, we can see that this kind of carving is largely restricted in its distribution to northern Yorkshire and to the Eden valley and coastal strip of Cumbria; we can also now distinguish regional varieties of this type of carving.

Bidston obviously lies far from the main centres of hogback production. It is, in fact, one of only four such carvings to the south of the Cumbrian peninsula; the others are at Bolton le Sands and Heysham in Lancashire together with a third at West Kirby in Wirral. All of these sites, like Bidston, are on or near the coast and appear to represent the memorials of Viking traders operating around the Irish sea. Like many hogbacks, the Bidston carving carries Christian symbolism in its Trinitarian linked triquetra and its worn scroll work.

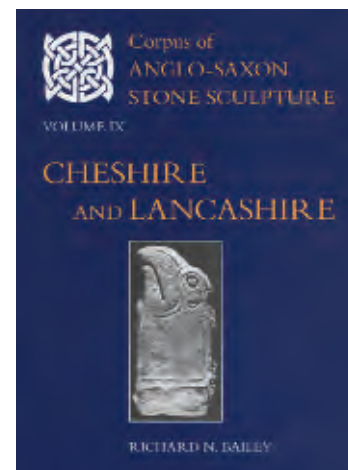
This hogback is important for (at least) two reasons. Firstly, it is one of a group of 10th-century carvings which are concentrated in the northern part of Wirral where they form an arc around the beach market at Meols – a site which is now beyond the sea defences but which we know, from 19th-century finds, was a long-existing trading centre which had a marked revival in the Viking period. This limited distribution suggests that Wirral's wealth in this period, with a consequent ability to commission stone carvings, was concentrated in the northern part of the peninsula and was dependent on trade rather than agricultural exploitation of the land.

Even more intriguing is a second deduction. The lay-out of the decoration on the Bidston sculpture is in marked contrast to that of the other Wirral hogback at West Kirby. Like the hogbacks at Bolton le Sands and Heysham, the West Kirby stone is tall and narrow. It has tegulation (shingling) on the upper 'roof' of the carving and, below, an interlacing decoration in which the strands are broken into abutting sections of 'stopped plait'. This is the characteristic shape – and decoration – of hogbacks in Cumbria and, further north, in the Clyde valley; these identities presumably reflect trading and cultural contacts along the east side of the Irish Sea. Bidston's carving is totally different: it belongs with a group which we can conveniently label as the 'extended niche' type in which the upper, 'roof', part of the face carries a horizontal run of interlace whilst the lower decoration is set within a curved niche. This class also has large end-beasts with both front and hind legs.

This is not a type of shape or decoration which is found in Cumbria. But it is a form which characterises York and its hinterland, with Brompton providing the best parallels; Brompton indeed is particularly relevant because it also preserves a hogback which had the same miniaturised proportions as the Bidston carving. The implication is that the Bidston sculptor, or his patron, was familiar with the decorative tastes and

monument preferences of 10th-century Yorkshire. In death the family of a Bidston trader chose to make a symbolic statement of his identity with a Yorkshire-based elite.

The York-Dublin axis was a major feature of political and commercial activity in the first half of the 10th century. Thanks to the discovery of the Cuerdale hoard, scholarly attention has hitherto focussed on linking routes between the two capitals via the Ribble and Aire valleys. Bidston's hogback is a useful reminder that other routes were available for exploitation. And that at least one Yorkshireman realised these opportunities.




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Rosemary Cramp is Emeritus Professor of Archaeology at Durham University, and a Fellow of the British Academy.

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Richard Bailey is Emeritus Professor of Anglo-Saxon Civilisation, University of Newcastle upon Tyne. For more on his *Cheshire and Lancashire* volume in the British Academy's *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture* series, see [www.britac.ac.uk/pubs](http://www.britac.ac.uk/pubs)

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The Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture project has recently been awarded £10,000 by the Pilgrim Trust, to further research work on the Anglo-Saxon sculpture of Norfolk. The project's website is at [www.dur.ac.uk/corpus](http://www.dur.ac.uk/corpus)

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# THE SURVIVAL OF STAINED GLASS IN SEFTON, LANCASHIRE

*The two most recent catalogues in the British Academy's series 'Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi' ('Corpus of Medieval Window glass') cover the counties of Lancashire and Cheshire. Their author, Dr Penny Hebgin-Barnes, explains how glazing with traditional religious themes survived the Reformation in north-west England.*

REMAINS OF 16th-century stained glass in St Helen's church, Sefton (Lancashire), show that traditional Catholicism was flourishing in north-west England during the 1540s, after Henry VIII had instituted the English Reformation. This glazing derives from several documented windows, and provides an excellent example of popular religion in the mid-Tudor period – and incidentally of the preconceptions of 19th-century historians.

## The Molyneux family and Sefton church

The church was the centre of a thriving local community whose most important members were the Molyneux family of Sefton. They were lords of the manor and patrons of the church, whose rector was usually a Molyneux cadet. Most of the present church was built during the incumbencies of James (1489–1509), Edward (1509–1536) and Anthony Molyneux (1536–1557). Anthony rebuilt the chancel and the lay patrons the nave, so it was truly a family concern. Brasses commemorating two successive heads of the family, Sir William Molyneux (d. 1548) and his son Sir Richard (d. 1568), and Sir William's aunt Margaret Bulkeley remain in the church.

In retrospect the mid-16th century was a time of great upheaval, with Henry VIII's major religious changes followed by the violent iconoclasm of Edward VI's reign (1547–53), which had such a destructive effect on churches. But the Molyneux family demonstrated that this was not anticipated at the time. They continued to rebuild, adorn and glaze their church throughout Henry VIII's last years. Inscriptions record that the chancel was built and glazed c.1535–45, and the windows of the south aisle glazed in the 1540s. In 1542 Sir William glazed the east window of the south aisle. When Margaret Bulkeley died in 1528 she left money for a chantry from which the wooden screens survive. In this small private chapel the priest Robert Parkinson said masses for her, and in 1543 he glazed its window with a loquacious inscription requesting prayers for her soul, recording her benefaction and his own part in implementing it.

Only four years later Edward VI's government abolished chantries and plundered their valuables and the bequests that funded them. Prayers for the dead were

forbidden and laws were even passed ordering the defacing of inscriptions that requested them, although Robert Parkinson's has survived. Religious images were destroyed and church screens torn down, but Sefton retains much of its beautifully carved 16th-century woodwork, including many screens and a varied collection of carved bench ends, many bearing religious motifs including the emblems of Christ's Passion.

## The surviving 16th-century glass

The present east window of the chancel was glazed in 1870, necessitating the removal of its remaining 16th-century glass, but the writings of later visitors and the surviving fragments in other south windows strongly suggest that it contained scenes from the life of the Virgin, while the south window of the chancel contained scenes from the life of Christ including the supper at Emmaus. This is consistent with the emphasis placed on Christ and the Virgin in religious art at this time.

The remaining glass of the north and south windows of the chancel dates from the 1540s. Some canopy tops are late Gothic in style, but with Renaissance elements confidently integrated, which is typical of the period. There are also scrolls bearing phrases from the Psalms 'Benedictus dominus die quotidie' and 'Deus adiutor noster in eternum'.

The east window of south chapel is glazed in memory of a Molyneux killed in the First World War. Most of its remaining original glazing was removed to accommodate the new glass, but the inscription dated 1542 which asks for prayers for the good estate of Sir William Molyneux (d. 1548) remains along the bottom of the lights; the 20th-century glass includes an inscription drawing attention to this, demonstrating the family's continued interest in their ancestral connection with the church.

Most of the remaining 16th-century stained glass has been assembled in the easternmost south window of the south aisle. It includes figures of the Virgin Mary and St Elizabeth from a Visitation scene (Figure 1), two



Figure 1. *St Elizabeth*. Photo: copyright English Heritage, taken 2002, CVMA inv. no. 008469.





Figure 2. *Trinity*. Photo: copyright English Heritage, taken 2002, CVMA inv. no. 008467.

fragmentary examples of the Trinity with God the Father holding the crucified Christ and the descending dove (Figure 2), two bearded heads (Figure 3) and a variety of quarries and architectural pieces. Intriguingly, fragments showing a nimbed mitre with a cross staff and a hand holding a sword which apparently belong together are likely to derive from a scene of the martyrdom of Henry VIII's *bête noire* St Thomas Becket, whose cult was banned in 1538. Three roundels depicting Evangelist symbols (lion, ox and eagle) remain in other windows. The glass-painting is of high quality, in a style influenced by the Netherlandish glaziers who monopolised important commissions in England during the first half of the 16th century, but it was probably produced by a strong regional workshop which had absorbed these influences. The most similar surviving



Figure 3. *Head of saint, fragments and 20th-century inscription*. Photo: copyright English Heritage, taken 2002, CVMA inv. no. 008465.



Figure 4. *Quarry depicting Judas*. Photo: copyright English Heritage, taken 2002, CVMA inv. no. 008478.

glazing is found in a fine window of 1533 depicting a Jesse Tree at Llanrhaeadr (North Wales).

Some of the quarries, which are more crudely executed than the main figures, depict emblems of Christ's Passion – including St Peter's scimitar with the severed ear on its blade, the head of Judas portrayed as an evil hook-nosed Jew (Figure 4), the cockerel on a pillar, and the hammer, nails and pliers. Such images, like their counterparts carved on the bench ends, are typical of contemporary popular devotion which emphasised Christ's sufferings.

### Catholic piety

How did so much religiously-themed glass and woodwork survive at Sefton? Orders for destruction came from the government in faraway London, but the north-west remained a stronghold of traditional Catholicism throughout the 16th century and beyond. The Molyneux family were not likely to destroy what they had only just installed and their continuing association with Sefton protected their church.

One other question is why the collection of 16th-century figures and fragments is accompanied by a 20th-century inscription stating that the Virgin and St Elizabeth came from the east window which formerly bore a Latin inscription commemorating Sir Richard Molyneux dated 1441. This information was obviously taken from *Sefton: A Descriptive and Historical Account*, published in 1893 by the antiquarians Carøe and Gordon. In other respects their account was accurate, but there is no evidence for any inscription of 1441, a date which makes no sense since the church was rebuilt in the 16th-century and St Elizabeth's gown and turban are unmistakably Tudor in style. Moreover, earlier writers had recorded inscriptions in glass

from the 1540s naming various members of the Molyneux family, but none mentioned Sir Richard (d. c.1454), who was head of the family in 1441. Unless Carøe and Gordon made uncharacteristically careless errors in both name and date, the only plausible explanation is that they tweaked the evidence to imply that the glass was produced in the 15th century, which fitted the received wisdom that religious subject matter could not have been produced in the 1540s after the Reformation had supposedly abolished it. This was based on long-established Protestant assumptions that the Reformation was readily received and implemented throughout England. But as historians such as Christopher Haigh and Eamonn Duffy have shown in recent decades, this was not true of north-west England, where popular Catholic piety was alive and well during the mid-Tudor period – as is amply demonstrated in Sefton church.

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*Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi* (CVMA) is an international research project dedicated to recording medieval stained glass. The work of the British CVMA committee ([www.cvma.ac.uk](http://www.cvma.ac.uk)) receives support as a British Academy Research Project, and its volumes are published by the British Academy. The British CVMA also publishes an online magazine on stained glass, *Vidimus* ([www.vidimus.org](http://www.vidimus.org)).

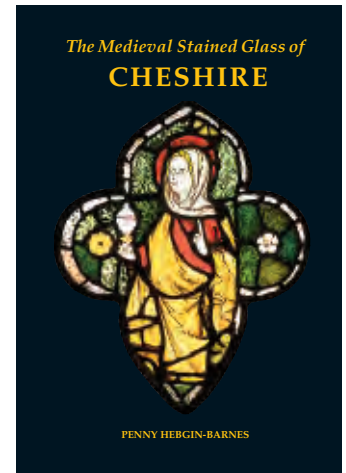
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Dr Penny Hebgin-Barnes is a long-serving member of the British CVMA Committee, and is the author of the two most recent CVMA Summary Catalogues to be published by the British Academy: *The Medieval Stained Glass of Lancashire* (2009), and *The Medieval Stained Glass of Cheshire* (2010). For more on these catalogues, see [www.britac.ac.uk/pubs](http://www.britac.ac.uk/pubs)

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# Medieval British philosophers

*The British Academy series 'Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi' ('Medieval British Authors') is making available texts and translations that demonstrate Britain's rich medieval philosophical heritage. The series Director, Professor John Marenbon FBA, explains why it is so important that such works should be edited and published today.*

THE MIDDLE AGES' conjures up images of a strange bygone world of castles and knights, peasants tilling the fields, great cathedrals packed with unquestioning believers. We are less likely to bring to mind one of the great medieval European inventions that now flourishes and moulds societies worldwide – the university. And even less to think of the activity most prized in the medieval universities, and still cultivated today, though, alas, with less energy and esteem – doing philosophy. True, there is no medieval term equivalent to what we now mean by 'philosophy'. But medieval thinkers undoubtedly tackled questions that we recognise as philosophical (rarely the same question as that posed by contemporary philosophers, but ones clearly related), both in studying what they called the 'arts' (the curriculum of Aristotelian sciences, including physics and biology, as well as logic and metaphysics) and in theology. What is more, their approach and methods bear an uncanny similarity to those of 21st-century professional Anglophone philosophers. Like them, the medieval philosophers sought clarity and precision above all else, despising rhetoric and not being shy to use technical language where necessary. Like contemporary philosophers, medieval thinkers were highly trained in logic, and they gave scrupulous attention to the exact form in which they made their claims and the validity of the arguments through which they drew their conclusions.

Philosophy was more international in the Middle Ages than it is today, when different languages tend to be linked to different approaches. Latin was the universal language of the medieval schools and universities, and students and professors moved with ease around Europe, with Paris the great centre from the early 1100s onwards. But Britain has a special place in medieval philosophy. There was even a period, in the first part of the 14th century – rather like those years in the early 20th century, when the Cambridge-based thinkers Russell, Moore and Wittgenstein transformed philosophy – when Britain was absolutely outstanding. John Duns Scotus, who rethought almost every area of philosophy, studied and taught at Oxford in the years up to 1300, before going to Paris. Writers such as Walter Burley, Walter Chatton, Robert Holcot, Adam Wodeham, Thomas Bradwardine and, most famous of all, William of Ockham made Oxford eclipse even Paris in the half century that followed. The British contribution to philosophy stretches back, however, to long before the universities. Alcuin, who had spent his life in York before becoming Charlemagne's intellectual advisor at the end of the 8th century, is arguably the first Latin thinker since the ancient world to start posing philosophical questions. Anselm, perhaps the most profoundly brilliant of all medieval thinkers, though born in Aosta in Italy, and for many years a monk of Bec in Normandy, is considered, as Archbishop of Canterbury, an honorary

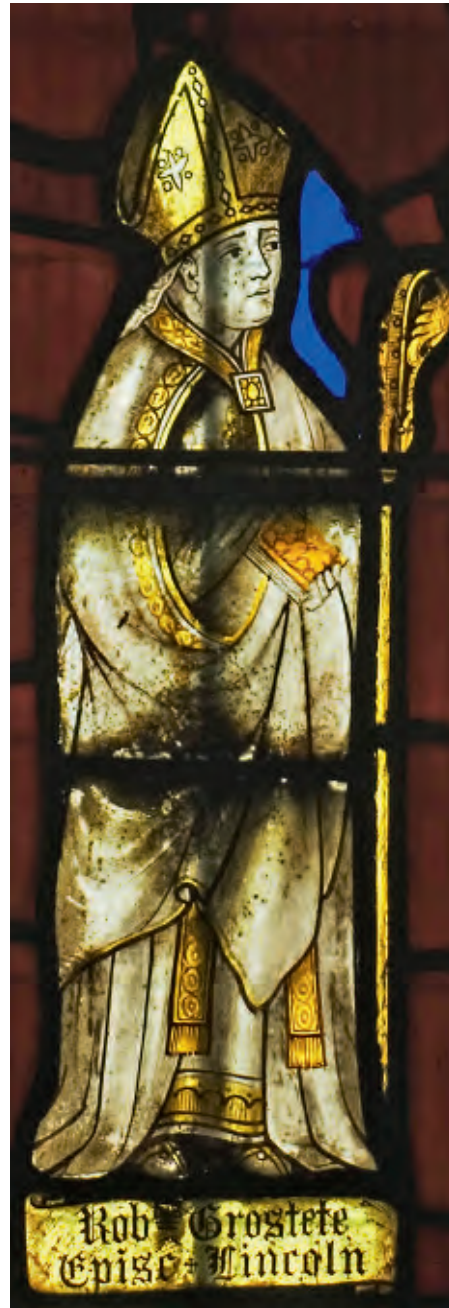


Figure 2. A 15th-century image of a bishop, identified by the 19th-century inscription below as Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln. From the parish church of St Helen, in Lea, Lincolnshire. Photo: Gordon Plumb.

Figure 1. Image of St Anselm in Canterbury Cathedral. Photo: CVMA inv. no. 000700.

Englishman (Figure 1). And a leading Parisian teacher of the 12th century, Adam of the Petit-Pont, who pioneered a formal understanding of logic, was born in a manor house at Balsham, near Cambridge. From the time of Robert Grosseteste (c.1168-1253), philosophy in Britain was closely connected with Oxford University (Figure 2). Grosseteste himself, and scholars such as Adam of Buckfield, Geoffrey of Aspill, Robert Kilwardby and – if the commentaries attributed to him are really his – Richard Rufus of Cornwall, were pioneers in explaining Aristotelian logic and philosophy. And after the brilliant years from 1330 to 1350, the Oxford tradition was continued in the second half of the century by men such as John Wyclif (a daring and original philosopher as well as a religious reformer), Chaucer's friend Ralph Strode and Richard Brinkley.

It requires only a small stretch of the imagination to see how fascinating as philosophy this material can be. Consider just the very first volume of the *Auctores Britannici* series, and the most recent one – the 17 volumes between, and the more now promised, would provide many more examples.<sup>1</sup>

### Anselm

The very first volume of the series, published over 40 years ago, is a collection of materials relating to Anselm.<sup>2</sup> Most of the texts are of interest to historians rather than philosophers, but there is a striking exception: a manuscript in Lambeth contains a series of exercises in philosophical analysis – discussions of wanting, being able, doing and of what is meant by 'something'. Even the first few lines give the flavour. 'Want' can be used in the sense in which a sick man *wants* to be well: if he can do something to make himself well, he does; if he cannot, then he would do it, if he could. But there is another sense of 'want', in which I can want something, but not do what I could to bring it about: I might *want* a pauper not to be naked, but do nothing to clothe him. And there is another sense: suppose my creditor cannot give me the corn he owes, but only (much less expensive) barley: I *want* to take the barley – rather than receive nothing at all, though at

the same time I do not want the barley, since I would prefer corn. This is just the beginning of an intricate discussion, but it shows how Anselm, like many a philosopher in recent decades, starts out from the conceptual distinctions found in ordinary language.

### Thomas Wylton

The most recent addition to the *Auctores* series is the *Quaestio de anima intellectiva (On the Intellectual Soul)*, written by the Oxford philosopher Thomas Wylton in Paris in the years before 1320.<sup>3</sup> By contrast with Anselm, Wylton might seem to be concerned with a positively outlandish problem: explaining and justifying the view, championed by the Arabic interpreter of Aristotle, Averroes, that there is just one ‘material intellect’ for all human beings. In fact, Averroes’s interpretation of Aristotle could be seen as a good way of accounting for the shared, impersonal character of scientific knowledge. But what is more striking about this discussion is its initial setting. Wylton accepts that the Averroistic view is not correct, because it goes against the teaching of the Church. Yet it is this view that he will spend thousands of words in developing, interpreting and defending, because it is the one that can best be defended by natural reasoning, whereas the true Christian view must be accepted on faith alone. Like so many medieval philosophers – but contrary to the popular stereotype of them today – Wylton is able to engage in an investigation that is itself entirely rational and scientific, although he does not call into question the truth of Church teaching.

### Scholarly editing

Bringing a work like Anselm’s or Wylton’s into the form of an accessible, edited, printed text is an extraordinarily time-consuming and skilled job. First, the manuscripts must be transcribed. Whilst scribes in the earlier Middle Ages used an easily-readable form of handwriting that was revived in the Renaissance and provided the model for print, most medieval philosophical manuscripts are written in difficult to decipher Gothic and late medieval scripts. Since parchment and then paper was precious, the hands are often tiny; and a complex system of abbreviations was used to save more space. Only someone specially trained in the reading of medieval handwriting, with an excellent command of Latin, and who also fully understands the often highly technical discussions in the text can set about the task. Usually, there will be more than one manuscript, and often dozens. They are rarely authorial autographs, and so the editor needs to collate and classify the manuscripts, so as to reconstruct as well as possible the text the author intended. And

then, if the text is to be accessible and useful, the sources it uses and references it makes must be sought out, a translation provided, and an introduction written on the work’s context and contents.

Unfortunately, universities and funding bodies in Britain today seem blind both to the fundamental value of such editions for scholarship and to the extraordinary skills needed in those who make them. Any genuine scholar of the Middle Ages, even one not personally inclined to text-editing, recognises that, without new editions, scholarship in the area is condemned to try to build without foundations, and that editing a text is one of the supreme tests of a medievalist’s training and ability. Yet officially far less credit is given for the years of patient work required to produce a good edition than to a few articles or a monograph that catch a fashionable theme and will probably no longer be read in a few years – whereas a good edition can still be useful a century later. It is a tribute to a certain self-sacrificing integrity that so many scholars continue to come forward to make available, through their painstaking work, more of the philosophical heritage of medieval Britain – but sad that so few of them have been trained or work in this country.

### Notes

- 1 Of the philosophers mentioned in the last paragraph, Grosseteste and Kilwardby are the objects of a continuing collection of editions in the series, which is also publishing Aristotelian commentaries attributed to Richard Rufus; Ockham’s immense political work, the *Dialogus*, will soon be starting to appear, and editions of work by Aspill, Strode and Brinkley are promised. A critical edition of Alcuin’s logical treatise and a translation of Adam of Petit Pont’s *Ars disserendi* are among the desiderata, as is an edition of Bradwardine’s very long, difficult but extremely influential *De causa Dei*.
- 2 *Memorials of St. Anselm*, ed. R.W. Southern and F.S. Schmitt (*Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi*, I; 1969). The series hopes to publish an English translation of the whole volume in the coming years.
- 3 *Thomas Wylton: On the Intellectual Soul*, ed. L.O. Nielsen and C. Trifogli, translation by G. Trimble (*Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi*, 19; 2010).

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John Marenbon is Senior Research Fellow, Trinity College Cambridge, Honorary Professor of Medieval Philosophy in the University of Cambridge, and a Fellow of the British Academy.

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For more on the *Auctores Britannici Medii Aevi* series, go to [www.britac.ac.uk/pubs](http://www.britac.ac.uk/pubs)

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The British Academy is grateful for the generous financial support that its longstanding British Academy Research Projects receive from a wide range of sources – both public and private sources in the UK, and overseas trusts and foundations. Significant examples of the latter include the support for the **Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources** from the Packard Humanities Institute, and the support for the **Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues** from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation of New York.

# The value of area studies

On 10 November 2010, the British Academy's International Engagement Day considered 'The Role of Area Studies in Higher Education'.

Liz Lightfoot gives a flavour of the discussion.

**A**S NEWS BROKE of the demonstrations in Tahrir Square, a cry went up in newsrooms across the UK: 'Find someone who knows about Egypt!' The hunt was on for experts to explain what was happening – just as in June 2009 when Iranian protesters took to the streets to denounce the election results.

Many of those who offer comment and analysis of world events in the media are area studies specialists dedicated to the academic study of individual countries or regions of the world, usually, but not always, alongside the study of indigenous languages. Behind the scenes, area studies lecturers are likely to be found advising government ministers and civil servants, often through Chatham House, the independent think tank.

Professor Rosemary Hollis, a visiting professor in the Department of International Politics at City University, found herself inundated with requests as the events in Egypt spiralled up the news agenda. Another Middle East expert widely used by the media to put the protests in context was Professor Fawaz Gerges, the Director of the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics.

But important though area studies specialists are to the media, and to companies trading internationally, relief organisations, governments and civil servants, the subject is suffering a crisis of confidence. The closure of several small specialist departments, and the sharp decline in the number of students leaving school with the knowledge of at least one modern foreign language, have fuelled the unease.

Higher education is moving into a new market era in which students will pay far more of the costs of their courses through the new tuition fee system. The survival of area studies departments and area studies posts within other discipline departments will depend more than ever on the number of undergraduates and postgraduates that the courses can attract. There will inevitably be reorganisation and economies, as university managements endeavour to balance the books. Even the most successful departments will be vulnerable to cost cutting if they are small and less able to bring in the big research contracts.

## Languages

The British Academy's Position Statement, *Language matters more and more*, urges decisive action to support the study of languages following the steep decline of take-up in schools since 2004 when they were made optional from the age of 14.

Keeping in mind the issues presented in the Position Statement, area studies specialists need to work even harder to demonstrate the importance and relevance of their work in the increasingly global economy and interconnected world, according to delegates at the British Academy's International Engagement Day on the role of area studies and Britain's need for international expertise and language skills.

## Putting the best case

The purpose of area studies has been defined as 'enabling students to acquire a unique depth and breadth of insight into the social, cultural and political dynamic of a region'. Would the name 'regional studies' be more apt, asks Maxine Molyneux, the director of the Institute for the Study of the Americas? Or perhaps the specialist fields would be more attractive to students if labelled branches of 'global studies' it was suggested at the conference in London. The word 'global' might also chime with university managers seeking to market their institutions as international in order to attract overseas students.

The very breadth of the intellectual tool-kit that area studies undergraduates are required to assemble is at once the subject's strength and its weakness. On the one hand, area studies achieves the interdisciplinary approach to scholarship which gives rise to some of the most innovative research, technological and scientific advances and artistic invention. On the downside, area studies cannot be pigeonholed into one particular discipline or department, be it economics, social science, history or geography.

Faced with a higher education funding system geared to subject areas, and research funding awarded to discipline departments which can be compared with each other for ratings, it is hardly surprising that area studies so often has to fight for what it can get. But there is a lot to fight for, says Professor Michael Worton, the Vice-Provost of University College London. 'We need to be a little more streetwise and a little bit more opportunistic than we have been in the past. We need to look in the longer term at retaining more power in the decision-making process, and not see ourselves primarily as the recipients and victims of government funding decisions.'

## Area studies: a demanding intellectual pursuit

Anyone who suggests that an undergraduate degree in Japanese Studies at the University of Cambridge, Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Oxford, Middle East and Mediterranean Studies at King's College, London or East European Languages or Culture at University College, London is less intellectually demanding than degrees in history, geography, maths or English fails to understand the demands made of area studies students.

Consider what a typical undergraduate at the University of Cambridge reading Japanese might be expected to study in four years, says Dr John Swenson-Wright, the Fuji Bank University Lecturer in Modern Japanese Studies at Cambridge.

'The student will do a compulsory regional, comparative Asian history course in the first year, together with a fast-paced intensive language programme; electives in the second year that include sociology, political science, economics, linguistics, international relations, film and literary studies, more history, "kanbun" or classical literary

Chinese, and of course all of this in a context where the language study continues apace. In the third year, the student has the opportunity and the challenge to apply this knowledge in the field, either by studying or working abroad, while all the while grappling with the sometimes daunting task of preparing their dissertation field work for the writing assignment in their fourth year,' he said.

The strength of area studies is that it provides a flexible education comparable to the liberal arts approach that has proved especially successful and attractive to university students in the United States. At a time when many argue that university studies have become unduly single subject focused, area studies courses provide the perspective and comparative analytical tools favoured by the generalist without sacrificing the rigour and transferrable skills of the specialist, Dr Swenson-Wright says. 'It might not be going too far to argue that area studies is loosely comparable to the approach of PPE – Politics, Philosophy and Economics, or Modern Greats.'

### Who needs area studies?

As the world shrinks in the face of the integrating forces of globalisation, the need for students who can function comfortably in different foreign environments, with the confidence that a mastery of the local language and culture provides, is self evident, argues Dr Swenson-Wright, who has published widely on the relationship between the United States and North-east Asia, and is an Associate Fellow at the Asia Program of Chatham House.

These days area studies graduates might find themselves working overseas for an NGO, reporting from the field in Afghanistan, Korea, Iraq or Colombia, or as an entrepreneur seeking to break into new business markets where language skills and cultural familiarity are so often the key to commercial success.

Britain needs more area studies graduates and post-graduates, not fewer, as they become absorbed in single-subject departments. Leading universities in Japan, Korea and China are promoting multilingual training in the arts, social sciences and humanities across the Asian region for their best students.

Dr Swenson-Wright argues that the UK is also at risk of critically falling behind the rest of the world in training students likely to form the next generation of scholars. 'In my own department of East Asian studies, the majority of my colleagues are from overseas, and a similar pattern can be seen amongst our graduate students where we have seen rising figures for enrollment of students from Asia, but strikingly few from the UK.'

Developing area studies expertise takes time, especially since it requires intensive training in one or more language. 'If the UK wishes to prepare its graduates for work overseas, or for engagement with critically important regions of the world, then it surely needs a long-term strategy to foster training and expertise in this area.'

### International relations and diplomacy

Figures in the field of international relations have argued for a wider approach that incorporates local knowledge and draws on cultural and linguistic awareness, alongside the focus on politics, history and economics.

In his address to the British Academy International Engagement Day, Dr Swenson-Wright said that many critics are inclined to point to the lack of trained Middle East specialists in explaining American's failure to manage successfully the transition from war to peace in post-conflict Iraq. 'The obvious need for linguistic expertise and cultural knowledge is nowhere more apparent than in the response to the post-9/11 challenge of radicalised Islamic fundamentalism. The



*Sir Adam Roberts, President of the British Academy, welcomes participants to the British Academy's International Engagement Day, held at the Law Society on 10 November 2010. Photo: David Graeme-Baker.*

US government's acceptance of this is reflected in the expansion of Arabic studies and the recruitment of substantial numbers of Arabic linguists and area studies specialists to work in the military, diplomatic and intelligence services.'

Local knowledge requires regular dialogue with experts from the region and an advantage of the area studies focus is that it provides a point of contact between scholars in the UK and their counterparts in the region, he said.

### Centres of excellence: the Latin American case

The late J.H. Parry, a historian and expert in Latin American affairs, was successful in persuading the University Grants Committee in the mid-1960s to establish five centres of Latin American Studies in the UK. In the wake of the Cuban Revolution, Parry, then Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wales, chaired the committee that published a report in 1965 strongly critical of the neglect of Latin America in British higher education and the general ignorance of the continent. The centres – which became known as Parry centres – were encouraged to build up library resources and highly qualified personnel and postgraduate programmes.

Nowadays the more market-driven model of funding, one which reacts to world events and sudden interest in regions, leads to the neglect of historic centres of excellence and short-term funding for projects that do not always lead to sustainable programmes, according to Maxine Molyneux, professor of sociology and Director of the Institute for the Study of the Americas.

By the funding of one or two new area posts here and there or small centres at universities with no prior expertise, library resources or language proficiency in the region, the funding councils have at times created just what the Parry institutions sought to overcome – the isolated scholar, she argues.

UK higher education has become less Euro-centric since the 1960s and there has been a significant increase in the coverage of other countries in degree programmes. But while Latin America features more within different subject syllabuses, the spread has been accompanied by a thinning out of the principal knowledge centres, Professor Molyneux says.

### Boom and bust

The topicality of area studies centres and their relevance to the modern world works in their favour when particular countries or regions suddenly rise up the news and policy agendas. In both the UK and the US, for example, there was a significant increase in resources for the study of Arabic and Middle Eastern affairs following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Sadly, however, when interest begins to wane, so does the funding. Continuity of support is essential to avoid a 'boom and bust' scenario, stresses Professor Tim Wright from the school of East Asian Studies at the University of Sheffield. 'The problem with providing a national resource is that no one knows where the next area of concern and demand for expertise will come from. Will it be a need for Kurdish

specialists, or people with deep knowledge of Afghanistan, Egypt or Pakistan? We need to be sure that the UK research base contains all the necessary resources on which to draw. Student demand and short-termism are not good principles on which to build well resourced centres with disciplinary and linguistic skills and wide contacts with the region which take a time to acquire, he says.

### Support for strategically important subjects: a success story

In 2004 the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was asked by the government for advice on protecting vulnerable subjects. The council commissioned a report by Sir Gareth Roberts, the late research physicist, which was published in 2005. He advised against an over-interventionist role that would prevent institutions from stopping teaching in some areas. Such pressure would undermine the authority of universities and their ability to adapt to new circumstances.

Instead he suggested that HEFCE should take targeted action in a number of areas that included modern foreign languages and quantitative social sciences. Following his report a £350 million programme for 2005-11 was launched to promote student demand and secure the provision of courses in vulnerable subjects.

Around £25 million went to help fund language-based area studies centres, covering Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian and East European languages, spread across several universities. The initiative was welcomed by the British Academy, but it warned in 2006 that short-term fixes were not the solution and pointed to the need for a continued national policy that would secure the long-term future of the centres at the end of the five-year period of funding.

### Sustaining international expertise

Many experienced academics working within an area or regional context are embedded within subject departments, adding a fresh, world dimension to other disciplines such as history, politics, economics, geography or music. Though some may find themselves working in isolation, many have links with specialists in other areas of the world within the department or with academics working in their own area in other subject departments.

The challenge, especially at universities without area studies centres, is to protect the posts when they become vacant and resist pressure from departments to choose the best economist or historian who may not be an area specialist, resulting in the gradual erosion of areas posts.

The University of Oxford has set up a model for interdisciplinary studies which has so far proved successful in defending areas posts, according to Professor Roger Goodman, the head of Oxford's social sciences division and the Nissan Professor of modern Japanese studies. In 2004 the university established a new School of Interdisciplinary Area Studies which is a full department within the social sciences division.

Costs are shared between the different areas, and income is pooled. 'There is cross subsidy to deal with short-term ups and downs, instead

of the boom and bust system which has contaminated area studies for many years,' Professor Goodman told the British Academy's International Engagement Day. In the first five years the school doubled its staff from 70 to 140 as more centres joined the model and research projects expanded.

It has given area studies specialists a strong sense of identity as area studies scholars with standing in their own departments, he said. 'We need area studies specialists to invest more in making and developing joint networks with overseas collaboration. The model to be avoided at all costs is the Harvard model where each area studies institution protects its own area and there is very little cross-disciplinary work.'

### Funding: a dilemma for area studies

It is not enough to see area studies as an endangered orchid that needs the right weather conditions to survive, according to Helen Wallace, a Centennial Professor in the European Institute at the London School of Economics and Political Science. The system is becoming more market driven in terms of student preferences and area specialists need to be more robust in making the case, she said.

Professor Wallace said the panel on the future of area studies she chaired at the International Engagement Day came to the conclusion that there was a need for better organisation. 'Very powerful cases were made for people in different branches working more closely together. Many of us were struck by the Oxford model, but not all universities would be likely to support it. There was a strong feeling that we need greater collaboration between universities,' she said. Equally, universities cannot afford to run too many loss-making departments, however crucial they are to the wellbeing of the country. Area studies specialists need to be prepared to talk in the language of the market, and to address new niche fields of study, in order to attract postgraduate and overseas students.

Area specialists complained that the Research Assessment Exercise, which informed the allocation of funding for research, forced some interdisciplinary work into subject categories where the disciplinary demands are different, thus distorting the research picture.

The ability of HEFCE, or a successor body, to intervene in the market to protect strategically important and vulnerable subjects would depend on two things – whether it would continue to have influence and a role to play, and the amount of money that would be left to deal with market failure.

### To the future

In the coming years when universities face both funding cuts and exposure to a new market in student demand, there may be pressure to break up area studies departments and disperse individual faculty

members to other disciplines. This would be disastrous and should be strongly resisted, warns Dr Swenson-Wright.

'We would lose the distinctive benefits in terms of both knowledge and practical expertise that area studies departments provide,' he said.

Disbanding area studies departments would remove an internationally competitive resource that gives the UK a comparative advantage in the global knowledge business.

The nurturing of the next generation of area studies specialists can start at school level with the provision of secondary school lessons in difficult but strategically important languages, such as Mandarin or Arabic, he suggested. Collaborative exchange schemes between students in the UK and other countries would provide language training abroad for our students and increased opportunities for foreign students and scholars from the region to travel to our universities.

Language-based area studies was not only important to industry and the economic wellbeing of the country, it was crucial to science and global health. 'If there is one thing that is going to change global health it is effective epidemiology and you can't have effective epidemiology unless you have language-based area studies. And yet we are absent in most cases from all the enormously important epidemiological studies.'

The language and area studies communities needed to move into much greater advocacy, said Dr Swenson-Wright. 'We don't have to be driven by the HEFCE or research agenda. There is much that we can do. We need to be thinking more about the nature of the kind of collaboration we are having with government and industry, both national and international.'




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Liz Lightfoot is a freelance journalist. She prepared the British Academy's booklet, *Working with Africa: Human and Social Science Research in Action*, which was launched at the Academy on 3 March 2011.

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# Lost in translation: 'Language matters more and more'



WITH OVER two-thirds of employers not satisfied with the foreign language skills of young people and over half perceiving shortfalls in their international cultural awareness, the onus on universities to ensure graduates are equipped for the current competitive job market has never been greater. *Language matters more and more*, the latest Position Statement by the British Academy's Policy Centre, advocates that universities should respond to the growing internationalisation of the graduate jobs market; provide language training to meet the needs of their researchers; encourage and enable their students to take time out of their studies to work or study abroad; make provision for their students to study a language while studying for a non-language degree; and work collaboratively to sustain languages at a time of considerable fiscal restraints.

The Academy's 2009 *Language Matters* statement warned of the damaging impact on universities, the skills base of UK citizens, and the UK's future international competitiveness. *Language matters more and more* moves on from this and makes recommendations on how the higher education sector itself can incentivise and increase language take-up at both school and university levels, whilst building the capacity of the UK's knowledge economy to meet national and international challenges. Professor Nigel Vincent FBA, Vice-President for Research and Higher Education Policy at the British Academy, said: 'This is a challenging time for UK students, and we should be making their transition from university to the globalised world easier, not harder. The British Academy has voiced its concern over the growing language deficit for some years, and the gloomy statistics speak for themselves. We need decisive action if we are to remedy this worsening situation.'

The Position Statement recommends that UK Vice-Chancellors adopt a wider definition of 'internationalisation', in line with the Bone report, *Internationalisation of HE: a ten-year*

*view*, rather than focus simply on recruitment of overseas students. The report argues that UK universities should develop long-term collaborative partnerships, stating that language provision must be available and part of a normal core curriculum.

It goes on to argue that this broader understanding of internationalisation and language learning needs to be placed at the heart of university missions and strategies. In view of the importance of languages to intercultural understanding, social inclusion, and the employability of graduates, the management and governing bodies of universities should ensure language learning is a key element of their strategies. Professor Vincent said: 'The roots of the problem lie within schools, but Vice-Chancellors have the power to drive change and help their students recognise the importance of learning languages, and about the countries where they are spoken and the cultures they sustain. We urge them to act and protect this country's long term economic, social and cultural standing.'

## New programme

*Language matters more and more* is merely one example of the Academy's work and advocacy in support of the health and sustainability of the humanities and social science research base. The British Academy is pleased that its efforts have been recognised by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and that it has received almost £5 million of new funding for the period from 2011 to 2015 to develop a new programme supporting languages and the use of quantitative methods, including (but not restricted to) statistics. The objective is to build capacity to address certain longstanding skills deficits, recognising that it is a deep-seated challenge. Over the next four years, the British Academy will undertake, facilitate and support a range of projects, fellowships and activities – including workshops, conferences and policy studies – that will foster not only research in these areas

respectively, but also allow the Academy to explore in greater depth the issues dealt with and brought into focus in our Position Statement and other British Academy work.

As Sir Adam Roberts, President of the British Academy, said: 'It is a very wide-ranging discussion and we [the Academy] have a special obligation to take this issue forward, not just from the phase of identifying the problem, which was the phase we were in two years ago, but in the phase of recommending action. We will be looking not only for people with expertise in these matters, but champions who will be able to advance the cause of, among other things, language studies. There are many other elements that we recognise need to be part of a co-ordinated programme, including publications on key aspects of these two issues, language and quantitative studies.'

## Launch

*Language matters more and more* was launched at a special event on 9 February 2011 organised by the British Academy Policy Centre. It brought together experts to discuss their different perspectives, and the action that needs to be taken to promote and incentivise the learning of foreign languages both at school and at university.

The event was attended by over a hundred researchers, teachers, diplomats and business people.

*Language matters more and more* was praised by speakers and participants alike as a significant and timely contribution, and was supported by Rt Hon. David Willetts MP as 'an excellent and very useful document with valuable recommendations'.

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The British Academy's Position Statement *Language matters more and more*, together with a record of the launch event, may be found via [www.britac.ac.uk/policy](http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy)

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# The Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in the Modern University

*Rt Hon. David Willetts, Minister of State for Universities and Science, gave a speech at the British Academy on 1 March 2011. The Minister was introduced by Professor Sir Adam Roberts, President of the British Academy.*

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## ADAM ROBERTS

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It's a huge pleasure to welcome David Willetts here to the British Academy, both to declare our newly refurbished premises officially open, and to deliver a speech on the arts, humanities and social sciences – which I know he views as an important statement of what he thinks about the subjects that this Academy exists to advance.

When the British Academy took on the lease of Nos. 10 and 11 Carlton House Terrace in 1998, the Foreign Press Association were our subtenants in much of No. 11, having occupied the space since 1945. When they moved out in summer 2009, the Academy decided to take

over this space, and renovate it with a view to enlarging the scale of events supported on behalf of the social sciences and humanities. In particular, we had long recognised the need to have a decent auditorium; it was deeply unsatisfactory that an Academy, for which academic lectures are a central part of its activities, did not have such a thing.

At a time of extreme financial stringency, the work to convert the buildings for the new use was generously funded by a capital grant of £2 million from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) – a grant that dates back to the period of the preceding government, and has been carried forward by the present government.



*Professor Sir Adam Roberts, President of the British Academy, introduces Rt Hon. David Willetts MP, in the Academy's new Wolfson Auditorium, on 1 March 2011.*

We have also had a grant from the Wolfson Foundation for £250,000 – in recognition of this Council has agreed that this new auditorium should be named the Wolfson Auditorium. And we have received contributions from Fellows of the Academy of very nearly the same amount (more than £225,000). We are extremely grateful to all those who have supported this big venture at such a difficult time.

Thanks are also due to our colleague, Professor Ray Pahl FBA, for his extraordinarily generous donation of the collection of modern British art which is displayed on the stairs and in the Gallery.

Work on the refurbishment of the new spaces in No. 11 began in May 2010, and was completed in February 2011. This work included new connecting doors at ground and first floor level between the buildings, the installation of new lifts and disabled facilities, and the provision of new office space in the basement and on the third floor.

No. 11 Carlton House Terrace was the London home of William Gladstone in his first years as Prime Minister: there is a fitting connection between his role as a public intellectual and the use to which we are able to put his former drawing room today.

It doesn't need me to tell anyone in this room – least of all the Minister – that this is a time of turbulence and radical change in higher education, and that these changes have been highly controversial within universities and indeed within this Academy. We at the Academy have a particular interest in their consequences for the humanities and social sciences.

There are inevitably differences of perspective between a self-governing academy of scholars and a government minister – even a minister who is also a scholar. I have written to the Minister on many issues. While I am not sure that all my letters were always welcome, I do note with appreciation that when I invited him to come and give a speech concerning the importance and value of the arts, humanities and social sciences, he accepted promptly. I am delighted that he is here at the Academy today, both to deliver this speech and to declare this Auditorium open.

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## DAVID WILLETTS

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It is a great privilege to declare the enlarged British Academy formally open – and I am proud that BIS has sponsored this excellent refurbishment alongside the Wolfson Foundation and Academy Fellows.

I well remember 11 Carlton House Terrace as the headquarters of the Foreign Press Association. But, as Sir Adam has said, it is as Gladstone's London house that this building has its greatest historical significance – at least till now.

Originally a high Tory who stuck with Peel, later the greatest Liberal of them all, a man who never lost his faith in free trade – Gladstone is someone that all of us in the Coalition can celebrate. And here we should remember his exceptional intellectual curiosity, as reflected in his great library.

Even when he was over eighty, Gladstone was closely involved in the transfer of 32,000 of his books from Hawarden Castle to their new home a quarter of a mile away, undertaking much of the physical labour himself. Many of the books were moved by wheelbarrow. 'What man,' he wrote, 'who really loves his books delegates to any other human being, as long as there is breath in his body, the office of introducing them into their homes?' That library is still thriving, incidentally – the only prime ministerial library in Great Britain.

And for me personally there is another connection with Gladstone. I have very fond memories of doing tutorials on 'Britain since 1865', being tutored by the late Colin Matthew – who died so young – in Gladstone's old set at Christ Church. Colin himself, I think, made a fantastic contribution to our intellectual life with his work on the *Dictionary of National Biography*, as well as his work on Gladstone himself.

Today is an opportunity to recognise the ongoing significance in our intellectual life of both the British Academy itself and the humanities and social sciences – the disciplines you represent. Their distinctive qualities were neatly summarised by Sir Adam Roberts in his excellent introduction to your recent pamphlet: 'The humanities explore what it means to be human: the words, ideas, narratives and the art and artefacts that help us make sense of our lives and the world we live in; how we have created it and are created by it. The social sciences seek to explore through observation and reflection the processes that govern the behaviour of individual and groups. Together they help us to understand ourselves, our society and our place in the world.'<sup>1</sup>

This is clearly the right place and the right occasion to tackle a worry in the academic community – and beyond – that the Coalition's policies on universities and on research are a threat to the arts, humanities, and social sciences. Last week, for example, Simon Schama expressed his fear that 'sciences and subjects which seem to be on a utilitarian measure useful have retained their state funding while the arts and humanities are being stripped of theirs'. Previously, Stefan Collini argued in the *London Review of Books* that the proposals contained in the Browne Report meant the 'dismantling of the public character of education.'

I would be concerned if these charges were true. And I am concerned that such distinguished thinkers could entertain them. Quite simply, the humanities and social sciences are essential to a civilised country. They bring deep fulfilment to us personally. They often give meaning and shape to our lives. Universities are among the most precious institutions any country possesses and they should be nurtured as such. Universities comprise a very high proportion of those European institutions which have lasted more than 500 years. That tells us something about their special value.

But rather than just assert that we in the Coalition value these disciplines, let me begin by clarifying what appears to be a genuine misunderstanding of our policies on funding, teaching and research – before turning to some deeper questions about their place in our universities.

### Teaching

At the moment, the amount of money a university receives to teach is divided into four bands, depending on the type of subject. These different bandings are not judgements of the relative value of courses. They are supposed to reflect the objectively higher costs of teaching some types of subject:

Band A is worth around £17,800 per student and covers the most expensive-to-teach courses, like medicine and dentistry;

Band B is worth around £8,700 and is for lab-based science courses;

Band C is worth around £7,100 and covers subjects with a fieldwork element; and

Band D is for all other subjects and is worth around £6,000.

Currently, there is a standard expectation that, for every undergraduate course, some £3,300 of these costs will be covered by tuition fees and loans. The key feature of the reforms proposed by Lord Browne is to remove about £4,000 of the basic teaching costs covered by grant across all subjects and put it into the hands of students. They will be lent the money to pay the higher fees and only pay back as graduates when they earn more than £21,000 – a more progressive repayment system than present.

That means teaching grant will generally only remain for subjects in Bands A and B at a level about £4,000 lower than now. A university wishing to cover its existing costs for these courses may decide to set an average graduate contribution of around £7,000.

This is a scrupulously neutral policy. But you will have noticed one special feature affecting arts and humanities courses, the vast majority of which are in Band D. For them, the loss of HEFCE grant that needs to be made up from higher graduate contributions is actually smaller. It amounts to around £2,700 – over £1,000 less, in fact, than the £4,000 all other subjects are losing in teaching grant.

So, to cover the existing costs of a Band D student, most institutions should only need to charge £6,000 – or perhaps a bit more once inflation has been accounted for. As I said in my Dearing Lecture a fortnight ago, the maximum allowable charge of £9,000 in 2012/13 would actually represent an increase for them of over 40 per cent even after inflation, as against an increase of 20 per cent or so for the other disciplines.

A lot depends on how universities choose to respond to these financial changes but you could argue that the replacement of teaching grant is greater for disciplines outside the arts and humanities because humanities and social sciences were receiving less already. So even though it is correct, strictly speaking, that these disciplines have lost their teaching grant, it is wrong to see this as any kind of bias against them.

Even when there will be no teaching grant for a discipline, that does not mean there is no Exchequer contribution. In fact, there is still a lot of taxpayer money going into universities but in rather different ways. As I said in a speech to Universities UK last week, we're looking at about £6.5 billion in tuition loans (on top of £2 billion of remaining teaching grant going to the high-cost subjects), £2 billion in maintenance grants and scholarships, and £3.5 billion in maintenance loans. We estimate that the cash going to universities in grants and fee loans combined could be 10 per cent higher by 2014-15 than it is now. Indeed we can afford this only because we get a lot of it back, eventually, from higher-paid graduates. Of the £10 billion we will be allocating in loans, around 30 per cent will be written off by the taxpayer, quite rightly, because some graduates do not earn enough to pay them back. This long-term contribution from the taxpayer helps to make this a progressive system.

There are some disciplines officially classified as 'strategically important and vulnerable'. In our grant letter, Vince Cable and I asked HEFCE to consider 'what subjects, including arts, humanities and social sciences subjects' should qualify. HEFCE will begin a consultation in May on how the remaining teaching grant should be allocated, and will present final proposals by Autumn for implementation in 2012/13.

There are also some relatively small, specialist institutions – like conservatoires – which have unusually high overheads. In the same letter, Vince and I hope that HEFCE will 'continue to make dedicated funding available' for these important subjects and institutions – 'for the foreseeable future'.

Will young people be willing to pay higher fees – even though they are funded upfront by the Exchequer – for the humanities and social sciences, or will they prefer other subjects instead? The evidence is that these subjects are actually very popular – representing almost half of all applications. Student numbers in these subjects – undergraduate and postgraduate – increased by 40 per cent between 2001/02 and 2009/10. And this is not because of some uniquely British focus on these disciplines. Our reputation in these disciplines is global – among non-EU students, the increase in these disciplines has been almost 80 per cent.

Employability is something students may think about more seriously, even though they will only start repaying their graduate contributions at the higher threshold of more than £21,000. I do not believe this is a test that these great disciplines need worry about where they are well taught in universities which attach high value to the quality of the student experience.

I have taken you through this analysis at some length because the charge of a bias against humanities and social sciences is very serious. But, quite plainly, our higher education reforms have no such bias. Your disciplines are cornerstones of academia.

## Research

Now let's look at research. As a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review, we have a ring-fenced, cash-protected budget of £4.6 billion for science and research. That is evidence of our strong commitment to research, even in tough times.

It is sometimes called the science ring fence but it contains funding for all the research councils, including the Arts and Humanities Research Council and the Economic and Social Research Council. It also includes funding for university research via the Research Assessment Exercise, which is worth £1.6 billion a year in England. This element of research funding is included in the ring fence for the first time. It is of particular value to the arts, humanities and social sciences, as they traditionally get about a third of it. Perhaps some people have not appreciated that we have protected the cash research budgets to a far greater extent than the previous government.

When Sir Adrian Smith consulted the research community and National Academies – including this one – about the specific allocation of funds within the research budget, there was a strong view that the balance between the different disciplines should not be shifted. There are always some specific pressures, such as the effect of exchange rate pressures on disciplines where research is financed via international subscriptions. However we have maintained the broad balance between the different research councils. The combined allocations in 2011-12 for the AHRC, ESRC and the British Academy will be a little over £280 million. Once again, we have not favoured one discipline with public funding at the expense of another.

Capital spending is outside the ring-fenced budget for research. I accept that this is where financial pressures are acute, but even here we have still been able to support really important projects such as the UK Centre for Medical Research and Innovation and the Diamond Synchrotron at Harwell. However, big capital projects are not just the preserve of the physical sciences. Today I can announce a major commitment to capital spending on social science research.

## Birth cohort studies

British birth cohort studies are acknowledged worldwide as unique data resources which have underpinned innovative research on the health, socio-economic status and wellbeing of people in our country. The five studies to date – in 1946, 1958, 1970, 1990, and, most recently, in 2000 – have followed large cohorts of babies from birth into adulthood. They have yielded a series of important findings and have influenced crucial areas of healthcare policy and education – from alcohol consumption and obesity to child development. The lively debate about declining social mobility has largely been driven by comparing the 1958 and 1970 birth cohorts – and finding that those born in 1958 were more likely than those born in 1970 to move from families with the lowest incomes to enjoying high incomes as adults. And when you read stories about how effective early intervention actually is or about the effects on a child's development of different patterns of parental work, they are likely to draw on the analysis of the millennium birth cohort.

Today, I'm delighted to announce that we are proceeding with the 2012 birth cohort study, which – in addition to its predecessors – will investigate how pre-natal influences, as well as the interplay of genetic and environmental factors, affect human development. The 2012 study will be the first UK-wide cohort for whom information will be captured before birth and in the first year of life. It will also examine differences within and between ethnic groups.

Who are these babies? Project leaders will recruit 90,000 pregnant women from 25 different UK maternity units. Parents will be invited to attend one of eight BCS Centres between the 25th and 30th week of pregnancy, when they will complete a questionnaire and provide samples. Mothers will then bring their babies to the same centres at four and 12 months to be weighed, measured and provide further samples. At the same appointments, experts will carry out detailed neuro-developmental assessments of the babies.

The second part of this £33.5 million project involves a programme to unlock the full potential of the existing studies. A new facility will enable social scientists to compare and contrast the experiences of the different birth cohorts, from the generation born into post-war Britain to the children of Olympics 2012. It will put us at the cutting edge of research in public health, education and social integration. For me personally, with my interest in fairness between the generations, this new resource should transform our ability to compare the lives and life chances of different generations.

Both aspects of the project are crucial to the Government's social mobility agenda, led by Nick Clegg. Tracking successive generations is essential to determining whether people are able to rise above the status of their parents. A crucial ambition of the Coalition is for children born next year to have greater opportunities to make their ways in life than the children born at the start of the millennium. This database will enable our performance to be judged over years to come. And of course it is a means of improving public policy by building up the evidence about what works and what doesn't.

And perhaps I can make one other point here. You will have noticed a twenty-year gap in cohort studies between 1970 and 1990. It is regrettable that the Conservative government of the 1980s chose not to commission a cohort study during that decade. Today's announcement demonstrates that this Government has a different approach. Despite the tough times, we are committed to gathering vital data – in the truest sense of the word – and to making full use of Britain's strengths in social science.

## Research Excellence Framework

There has been another announcement today of interest to many people here. HEFCE and the Devolved Funding Bodies have confirmed that they are putting a 20 per cent weighting on impact in the new Research Excellence Framework (REF), when it succeeds the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 2014.

Quality-related Research funding (QR) is a major income stream for some of our most competitive universities. In recent years, Bath, for example, has used QR money to establish the only UK research centre devoted to the social aspects of death, dying and bereavement. Exeter

has supported its Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies. And for individual scholars, QR is often the main source of co-funding – enabling fellows and temporary lecturers to establish themselves and complete research projects.

I know there are some in academia who have fears about impact. I myself was a sceptic, for we must never jeopardise blue skies research. Indeed, one reason for the £5 million increase in the British Academy budget in the spending review was to boost fundamental research among the next generation of scholars.

My own fear was that impact assessment would end up requiring clunky attempts to make impossible predictions about the impact of research activity. That's why I decided to delay the REF for a year for HEFCE to review its design, and decide how impact could best be assessed. HEFCE has since piloted it across several disciplines. The REF Panel on English Language and Literature was – by all accounts – one of the star turns in the pilot exercise. Indeed, the British Academy, the AHRC and the ESRC have each published excellent accounts of the impact of research in their fields.

When introduced, the REF will reward academics who wish to spend part of their career outside universities – in, say, a cultural institution – and recognise the incidental impacts of excellent scholarship.

It will have other benefits too. A number of scholars have spoken to me about the constraints of peer review. Richard Smith has described some of these in his book, *The Trouble with Medical Journals* – and they can affect the humanities and social sciences too. They affect the historian or the social scientist who feel they must investigate their subject in Massachusetts or Michigan – rather than Caithness or Cornwall – to increase their chances of having an article accepted by a prestigious US journal. The particular structure of academic publishing in some subjects – with so many of the leading journals based abroad and rewarding, above all, theoretical innovation – can itself distort research activity in some disciplines, such as business studies or economics. And for me as a layman who tries to draw on research in these disciplines, I hope proper value can be given to the review essay, the masterful scholarly book with a broad sweep, and to those academics willing to work for a time outside academia – giving policy advice, for example. I would welcome a more open debate in academia about these issues. Perhaps there is a role for the British Academy here.

Peer review is clearly a global gold standard. It means critical assessment by international scholars and engages audiences beyond our shores. However, peer review is not the only measure of success. The REF will, I hope, reward other achievements.

### The value of the humanities and social sciences

One worry about impact has been that scholarship just becomes a means to something else. I say again that your disciplines are fundamentally worthwhile in and of themselves. They are deep sources of human satisfaction, helping us to navigate our way through the world – both as individuals and as a society.

But there is a paradox: as soon as we start trying to explain why they have this value, we focus on utilitarian outcomes. That is a theme of

the recent collection sponsored by the AHRC and edited by Jonathan Bate, *The Public Value of the Humanities*. His collection follows on from the important recent book *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* by Martha Nussbaum, herself a Corresponding Fellow of this Academy.<sup>2</sup>

This public value comes across most clearly when we see how the natural and medical sciences find themselves needing to draw on insights from arts, humanities and social sciences. Perhaps I can briefly offer two examples of this.

After the attempted bomb plot over Detroit in December 2009, lawyers, ethical philosophers and psychologists got together in two workshops with computer scientists and physicists to discuss aviation security. The solution to safer air travel is not only about introducing state-of-the-art sensors, for example; they must be compatible with democratic values and the expectations of travellers.

Then again, I was recently at a meeting to discuss the contribution of our research to international development. We can be very proud that drugs and vaccines emerging from research funded by the Medical Research Council tackle the diseases of the developing world. But then the medical researchers said that discovering the drug was not the end of the process. One problem they had encountered was that, in some developing countries, people were very wary of drugs or vaccinations promoted by Westerners and even feared they were a plot to damage their health. The medics needed to understand where these beliefs came from and how they spread, if they were to run a successful vaccination programme. That meant learning from research on local cultures, the dissemination of rumour, and attitudes to medicine. Almost every really big issue needs to be looked at from the perspective of different disciplines. That is why humanities and social sciences are quite rightly at the heart of contemporary enquiry.

### Integrity of the university

Let me end by considering the place of the humanities and social sciences within universities as our reforms are introduced over the coming years. Among the concerns expressed by Stefan Collini, for example, is that a more contractual relationship between students and institutions will undermine teaching and learning, and indeed the very identity of the university. I always learn from Stefan's beautiful and intelligent essays on these issues. But perhaps I can risk three challenges to his argument.

First, I do actually want the student to have a stronger consumer voice. Over the past decades, universities have had such strong incentives to focus on research that the role of teaching has been undervalued. That has to change. It is one of the most important reasons for putting financial power in the hands of the student. And that has to be backed up with information on all those practical issues from promptness of academic feedback to how many seminars you will get.

This sort of consumerism should not jeopardise the relationship between teacher and student – in fact it brings it back to the heart of the university. Why should students lose respect for their lecturers as macroeconomists or linguists because they have clarity on contact hours or about the ways in which certain disciplines will help to

develop their broader skills? And I am four square with Stefan when he says that these consumers are – as graduates – paying for an education, not for a degree. We will be robust in protecting the boundaries around academic integrity and freedom.

My second response is to accept that some students go to university as a route to a job. This is part of the role of the university in a modern economy and we should not be too sniffy about it. After all, it is probably how universities began, training people for jobs in the church or staffing the royal administration.

Take a lone parent who might have left school at 16 without much by way of qualifications and is now struggling to raise her children. But she wants to do better by her family and so she is studying part-time at a local university so she can get a qualification to work as a radiographer. She may have a 'transactional relationship' with her local university, but there is still a fundamental nobility to what she is doing. We should respect her for it and we should respect the universities, not always the most prestigious, which provide such opportunities.

Even if it is not particle physics or Jane Austen, it is still entirely worthwhile: it transforms people's lives for the better. And you know there are quite a few affluent students with opportunities in life a lot better than hers for whom university is also, essentially, a route to a job.

Our higher education system accommodates students with all sorts of goals. And students with the most utilitarian of intentions may change once they start a degree course and experience university life. Last Friday, a young man studying at Southampton Solent University came to see me in my constituency office. He was studying journalism and wanted a trial interview with me on my book, *The Pinch*.<sup>3</sup> He described how he had come to university pretty uninterested in what happens in the wider world, but the experience had got him hooked on politics and the news. That awakening happens at university for hundreds of thousands of young people every year.

But the third response to Stefan is the most important. Our universities are very special places indeed. I have the good fortune to visit many of them. I always enjoy the notice boards with posters about a new indie band on tour, a special lecture by a visiting expert, invitations to audition for a play, a campaign against injustice somewhere in the world. It is a glimpse into a kind of community many of us on the outside rather envy. It works because it brings together such a diverse range of people and such a range of interests.

Stefan's deepest fear is that the university, as an institution like this, is at risk of unravelling. But I am an optimist. The institution works because of its range. Arts, humanities and social sciences are a crucial part of the life of such institutions, just as they form an important part of our own lives.

## Note

- 1 *The British Academy's booklet Past, Present and Future: The Public Value of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, published in June 2010, is available via [www.britac.ac.uk/policy](http://www.britac.ac.uk/policy)
- 2 For Professor Nussbaum's lecture to the British Academy on this subject, held on 16 December 2010, go to [www.britac.ac.uk/events/2010](http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2010)
- 3 For the British Academy's panel discussion on *The Pinch*, held on 2 March 2010, go to [www.britac.ac.uk/events/2010](http://www.britac.ac.uk/events/2010)

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Rt Hon. David Willetts is Minister of State for Universities and Science (attending Cabinet), and has been the Member of Parliament for Havant since 1992.

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*David Willetts holding Gladstone's hat outside the front door of Gladstone's former home, No. 11 Carlton House Terrace. Photos: Matt Crossick.*

# The British Academy

**The British Academy**, established by Royal Charter in 1902, is the United Kingdom's national academy for the promotion of the humanities and social sciences. It is funded by a Government grant, through the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

The Academy is an independent, self-governing body of more than 800 Fellows, elected in recognition of their distinction in one or more branches of the humanities and social sciences. It aims to inspire, recognise and support excellence and high achievement in the humanities and social sciences, throughout the UK and internationally, and to champion their role and value.

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- Promoting these disciplines on international platforms, building collaboration and creating opportunities for UK researchers overseas
- Increasing the scope and impact of communications and policy activity, and creating events and publications that communicate new research and encourage public debate
- Strengthening opportunities for Fellows to contribute their expertise to the intellectual life of the Academy and the country.

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THE BRITISH ACADEMY  
10-11 Carlton House Terrace  
London SW1Y 5AH

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7969 5200

Fax: +44 (0)20 7969 5300

Web: [www.britac.ac.uk](http://www.britac.ac.uk)

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