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> **dictionarius**, (sc. *liber*) word-book, dictionary.
> ~ius dicitur libellus iste a dictionibus magis necessariis,
> quas tenetur quilibet scolaris non tantum in scrinio de
> lingnis facto sed in cordis armariolo . . retinere GARL. *Dict.*
> 120; **1396** excerpta Ambrosii de Officiis; ~ius; et alia
> (*Invent.*) *Meaux* III xcix; **1439** item prima pars ~ii;
> secundo folio 'similia' (*Invent.*) *MunAcOx* 759; **1501** item
> prima pars dixionarii; secundo folio 'amici' (*Invent.*) *Cant.*
> *Coll. Ox.* I 18; nec ~ium aliquem praeter Hesychium ac
> Dioscoridem MORE *Ut.* 216.

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The importance of soft power · A 250-year-old cache of unopened letters
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BRITISH ACADEMY REVIEW · ISSUE 24 · SUMMER 2014

The articles in this issue give a flavour of the wide range of activities undertaken by the British Academy in the academic year 2013-14. Some articles show humanities and social sciences scholarship engaging with the major issues of our time. Others offer intriguing perspectives drawn from the Academy's various academic events, publications, research projects and research posts.

The articles provide links to a wealth of supporting material available via the British Academy's website, which will enable the reader to explore further the ideas discussed here.

Cover: a charter written in the 9th century (see article on page 38); an entry from the recently completed *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (see article on page 46).

BRITISH
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for the humanities and social sciences

An outstanding investment in what really matters

NICHOLAS STERN

In his address to the Annual General Meeting on 17 July 2014, Lord Stern of Brentford reflected on some of the achievements of the British Academy in the first year of his Presidency. This article is an edited version of that Presidential Address.

For me, the British Academy has two overarching goals: fostering excellence, by providing the resources, time and space to generate new research, with a special emphasis on supporting early-career scholars; and second, putting our subjects to work – showing what they can do. These twin goals are mutually supportive. We demonstrate, I hope confidently, that we are an outstanding investment – not just of public funds, but also for philanthropic sources – in what really matters, and in the future of the UK and the world more generally. In other words in making our case, we are the opposite of defensive. This year has been one of implementation. Let me illustrate what I mean through some recent examples.

Prospering Wisely

At the Annual General Meeting in July 2013, I said I believed that one of the great questions we face as a society – and as part of an increasingly interdependent world – is to understand what we mean by prosperity. In February 2014, the Academy offered a response to that question with *Prospering Wisely* (Figure 1). Using a booklet, videos and a specially created website, we set out to demonstrate how the humanities and social sciences can contribute both to an understanding of 'prosperity', and indeed to prosperity itself. It included video interviews with a range of Academy Fellows – a powerful way of going beyond assertion and showing argument and analysis at work. I think it illustrated practical ways in which we can see knowledge and insights from our disciplines feeding into our national life.

In the introduction to the *Prospering Wisely* booklet, I said that the humanities and social sciences 'encompass all the elements that make for a good life and a healthy
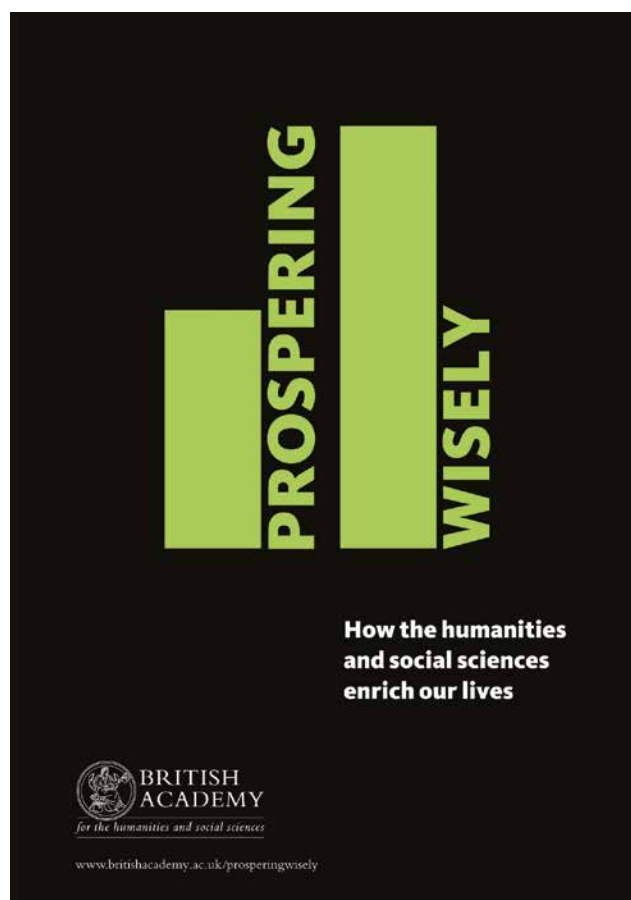
Figure 1
The *Prospering Wisely* booklet and website were launched on 12 February 2014 – together with Issue 23 of the *British Academy Review* which focused on the subject. More information is available via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/prosperingwisely

society.' This is in large measure why we do what we do, and why we believe it matters. We recognise, indeed celebrate, that our disciplines are valuable in themselves, that learning and scholarship are intrinsic goods. But we also understand the contribution they make as vital drivers of human progress. They provide the rigorous scrutiny and insights, the ideas and the long-term

Figure 2
Lord Nicholas Stern (right) introduces the first of the British Academy Debates on the subject of Ageing, in London on 26 February 2014. The panel that discussed the issue of 'Benefit or Burden? Coming to terms with ageing Britain' was made up of Bronwen Maddox, Professor Julia Twigg, Evan Davies (chair), Professor Sir John Hills FBA and Professor Alan Walker FBA. To watch video recordings of the three Debates on Ageing, or to download a booklet summarising the arguments, go to www.britishacademy.ac.uk/ageing

thinking that can – and do – have a profound influence on our social and cultural well-being, on the communities we live in and on our place and reputation in the world. And sometimes we provide the critical assessments and dissent which are vital to democracy and to intellectual progress. I think we would all sign up to the idea that a society without thriving social sciences and humanities risks achieving at best only an arid kind of prosperity, far less rich than our creative human culture deserves – and at worst confusion, apathy, decline and conflict.

The Academy will continue to represent and speak for the interests of the community of scholarship which makes all these contributions possible, and which often feels threatened, unloved and vulnerable.

The British Academy's Fellows embody and represent the very best of academic life in the humanities and social sciences. We focus, rightly, on excellence, as we must. But we must never forget that this excellence rests on the fact that our disciplines are taught and researched by more than 60,000 academic staff across the UK, and studied each year by around one million UK undergraduates, 60 per cent of all postgraduates and some 250,000 – indeed the majority of – international students. That academic system not only contributes to all those non-financial aspects that make for prosperity; it also delivers the academic excellence which is a crucial comparative advantage of the UK and thereby delivers substantial wealth into the UK economy. The academic excellence and strength of our universities and research must surely be at the top of the list of the attractions and competitiveness of the UK. We will carry on making that case.

The British Academy Debates

This brings me to the British Academy Debates. The experiment in staging large-scale public discussions around the country which could demonstrate the humanities and social sciences 'at work' can, I think, be regarded as a success. The idea is that through grouped series of events we examine and illuminate some of today's most difficult questions and toughest human and policy challenges. In the first series of Debates, leading academics and other public figures discussed some of the key opportunities and challenges posed by the ageing population, highlighting key issues and research results, and along the way demolishing some popular nostrums or stereotypes. The events attracted substantial audiences in London, Sheffield and Edinburgh (Figure 2), with many more watching the online recordings. I also took part in an extra 'spin-off' event on Ageing at the Hay Festival in May, where the Academy has now established an annual presence.[1]

I believe we need these Debates for two reasons. First, because of the sheer scale, complexity and urgency of the challenges we are facing, as societies, as economies, and as individuals. The UK faces enormous pressures in the years ahead – economically, politically, socially, constitutionally – including tough decisions for public spending.

Second, it is part of the Academy's duty and strategy to help more people not only to understand these issues better but also to understand that these are areas where the humanities and social sciences provide deep insights and great public value. Research, scholarship and expertise in our disciplines illuminate human dilemmas and explain how economies, cultures and communities function. They help make the complex intelligible, and help us understand human values and possibilities. And in so doing, they often force ethical issues and choices into the open and broaden the understanding of alternatives.

The British Academy Debates have shown – and will show – that we can make an important contribution to discussion of these challenges. They can help provide a new kind of national conversation. Further series of Debates have now been planned and will focus on 'Immigration' (in autumn 2014, in Birmingham, Liverpool and London)[2] and on 'Well-being and Public Policy' (in early 2015, in Manchester, Cardiff and London). We are also considering ways to ensure that subsequent series can involve and build on more of the expertise from across the Academy – its Fellows, its

1. See pages 4-9 of this issue for 'The British Academy on Ageing' and '10 quick questions about processing speed'.
2. More information can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/immigration

funded research, its policy outputs and its international work. Like *Prospering Wisely*, the Debates are a way of helping to create an intellectual atmosphere where, by showing our subjects at work, we will advance the recognition of our disciplines in our national life.

Working shoulder-to-shoulder with our fellow academies

Let me emphasise that nothing I am saying about working to ensure that the public value of the humanities and social sciences is better understood should be taken as implying any kind of false competitiveness with science, technology, engineering and medicine. They are intertwined and mutually supportive. Science, engineering and medicine are vital drivers of human progress and we must celebrate and nurture them. We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our fellow national academies – the Royal Society, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Academy of Medical Sciences – in delivering a shared narrative on the importance of all parts of this country's research and science base. Last year the academies' joint document, *Fuelling Prosperity*, made a powerful case to the Government for continued investment in all areas of academic research in order for the UK to keep pace with its international competitors.[3] We cannot afford to lose our hard-won reputation as a beacon for world-class research.

The kind of economy the UK now has, and shares with more and more of the developed world, depends on the creativity, knowledge and skills that come from social science and the humanities, just as it needs capital resources and equipment. This 'fuel' helps achieve growth that can renew and adapt – by driving innovation, by challenging, questioning and by offering up new ideas. More than three-quarters of the UK economy is now in services, with a constant need for people with knowledge and skills in critical analysis, problem solving, negotiation and communication, teaching and listening, speaking other languages. These are the very skills that training in the humanities and social sciences provide.

We also have a duty to speak out on matters of vital importance to research excellence, particularly where others may feel inhibited. A couple of weeks ago, I and other national academy Presidents wrote to newspapers to express our shared concerns at the lack of attention being paid in the debate over the Scottish independence referendum to the impact that separation could have on Scotland's outstanding research base, and indeed that of the rest of the UK. We were not taking a position and saying vote no; but we were drawing attention, on behalf of our various disciplines, to a crucial issue that has been too little aired.[4]

Figure 3
Lord Stern visits the British Institute in Amman in June 2014. It is one of two research institutes operated by the Council for British Research in the Levant, which is supported financially by the British Academy.

International partnerships

Our international partnerships are of vital importance. Ideas should have no national boundaries and we live in an ever more connected world. There are many examples, but let me mention two from the world's largest economies. In China we had a very productive workshop with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing on international economic policy and governance. And in June 2014 we had a fascinating discussion here in London with the American Academy of Arts & Sciences on prosperity and on 'soft power'.[5] I also had the opportunity in June to visit the British Academy Institute in Jordan (Figure 3): most of our institutes are concentrated around the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and have a vital contribution to make in the understanding of the culture, history, politics, economics and life of a region of vital importance to the world.

*

So, it has been a good year for the British Academy and it is in rude health. I personally have enjoyed my first year as President. And whilst I am keenly aware of the challenges and difficulties that lie ahead, I believe we have the strategy to take the Academy onwards and upwards.

3. *Fuelling prosperity: Research and innovation as drivers of UK growth and competitiveness*, 22 April 2013.
4. The British Academy, in collaboration with the Royal Society of Edinburgh, has also sought to shed light on the more general issues surrounding the referendum on Scottish independence: see page 16 of this issue for 'The British Academy on Scotland'.
5. See pages 13-15 of this issue for 'Global power, influence and perception in the 21st century'.

The British Academy on Ageing

In February–April 2014, the British Academy held its first series of 'British Academy Debates', on the subject of Ageing. The three Debates were held in London, Sheffield and Edinburgh. To watch video recordings of the Debates, or to download the *Ageing* booklet that summarises the arguments that were presented, go to www.britishacademy.ac.uk/ageing

The following article reproduces the first part of the British Academy's booklet on *Ageing*.

Ageing: where are we now?

'Older people' have always been part of society. Evidence shows that 'growing old' is not a new phenomenon, as we are often led to believe. Even in ancient and medieval times the proportion of people over the age of 60 is estimated to have been 6 to 8 per cent. However, life expectancy has been steadily increasing since the 1840s and with it the number of older people within the overall population. In the 1930s people over the age of 65 made up around 7 per cent of the UK population, the current proportion is around 17 per cent (2011), and this is expected to increase to around 20 per cent by 2025 (Figure 1). The fastest growing section of this ageing population is, however, that of the so-called 'oldest old', aged 85 and over. There are currently around ten thousand centenarians in the UK and this figure is predicted to grow five-fold over the next twenty years. Half of all babies born in the UK in 2014 can expect to live to the age of one hundred.

Are we ready for an older population?

The Filkin Report (2013)[1] pointed out that UK society is not ready for these drastic changes. They will invariably lead to some restructuring of society, but also have

Figure 1
From an ageing to a super-aged society: the percentage of the population aged 65+. Image: Alan Walker, New Dynamics of Ageing programme.

enormous positive potential. The discrimination against and marginalisation of older people in society often prevents us from promoting creative ways of addressing the issues associated with these population changes. Collectively, we can often fail to see older people as individuals, like ourselves, with equally important, equally valid views to express. There is a 'structural lag' in relation to ageing and old age: public attitudes, media representations, public policy approaches and practices lag behind the social and demographic reality and experiences of older people by around twenty years. Even many older people themselves have internalised the stereotypes of their own marginalisation, believing that they are less deserving of health care and welfare support than younger people.

While age is a common way of categorising others around us, it has become so pervasive that it often seems to describe the essence of a person: 'young', 'old', 'middle-aged' have all become stereotypes with their own connotations which are used in everyday language. This categorisation is misleading because it presents ageing as static when in fact it is an ever-changing process. In contrast to other types of discrimination such as gender and race, discrimination against older people in society affects all citizens since all of us grow older every day and will one day *be* 'old'!

1. Filkin Report, *Ready for Ageing?* (The Stationery Office, London, 2013) www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201213/ldselect/ldpublic/140/140.pdf
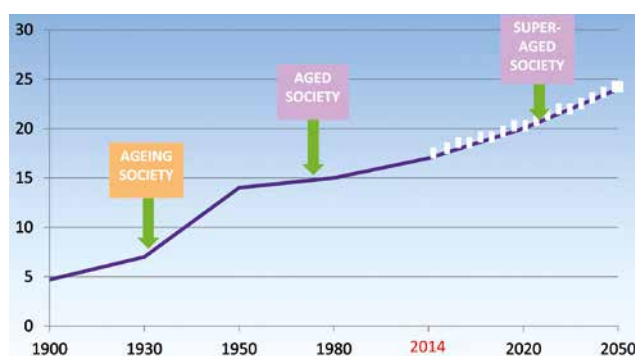
2. www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk

Professor Pat Thane FBA, speaking at the second Debate – 'Too old and ugly to be useful? Challenging negative representations of older people' – held in Sheffield on 25 March 2014. Professor Thane sought to dispel the common characterisation that in earlier times 'older people were normally cared for in the bosom of their families, and so didn't need publicly funded care – whereas in modern, busy, mobile, individualistic, selfish societies, older people are neglected and consigned to care homes and welfare services.'

Sally Magnusson chairs the third and final Debate, held in Edinburgh on 29 April 2014.

Pathways to a more positive vision

As a starting point it is essential to recognise the factors that prevent us from developing a positive vision for ageing in general, or from thinking about our own future ageing. We might ask ourselves: What is fun about it, or what are the benefits of being older? How do we envision our own lives, and those of our children, when it will be commonplace to live to the age of 100? Will we still be considered 'old' at the age of 70? Should we begin a second career at 60? How do we finance our retirement? What about our housing and homes?

Research currently being carried out in the humanities and social sciences (including the major New Dynamics of Ageing programme)[2] can help us think beyond the prevailing, often negative stereotypes associated with ageing. It provides a valuable starting point for shifting attitudes and starting to build a more positive vision. It provides a strong evidence base for a more accurate representation of age and ageing, which can support the efforts of older people themselves as they seek new and better ways of living and contributing to society. Drawing together evidence from across different disciplines, this new research shows firstly that the ageing process is individually hugely variable and malleable, and secondly that in order to make the most of our later years it is never too early to start thinking about it.

The second series of British Academy Debates – on Immigration – is being held in September-November 2014, at venues in Birmingham, Liverpool and London. Further information can be found at
www.britishacademy.ac.uk/immigration

More on ageing

In response to the British Academy Debates on Ageing, on 21 May 2014 Professor Chris Phillipson posted a 'Policy Perspective' piece on 'Re-thinking ageing populations'. The 'Policy Perspectives' page of the British Academy's website provides a unique forum for Fellows of the British Academy and others involved in the Academy's public policy projects to give their views on topical debates. To read Chris Phillipson's piece, go to
www.britishacademy.ac.uk/policyperspectives

Together with Hal Kendig, Chris Phillipson also contributed a chapter on 'Building Age-Friendly Communities: New Approaches to Challenging Health and Social Inequalities' to the British Academy report *"If you could do one thing…": Nine local actions to reduce health inequalities*, which was published in January 2014.

10 quick questions about processing speed

IAN J. DEARY and STUART J. RITCHIE

The third in the series of British Academy Debates on Ageing – 'The Best Years of Our Lives? Body, Brain and Well-being' – was held in Edinburgh. On 30 April 2014, as a satellite event, the British Academy held a small expert workshop entitled *Is the World Too Fast When We Are Slowing Down?* In this article, the two convenors describe the issues that the workshop wrestled with.

Ian Deary is Professor of Differential Psychology and Director of the MRC Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology at the University of Edinburgh, and a Fellow of the British Academy. Stuart Ritchie is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Cognitive Ageing and Cognitive Epidemiology, University of Edinburgh.

There is a beautiful incongruence about the human mental capability that psychologists call processing speed.

On the one hand, the tests that are used to assess it are basic and apparently irrelevant to the cognitive functions we should think would be important. How quickly can you write down the symbols that correspond to a number-symbol code? How quickly can you press the correct computer key when a number '3' appears on the screen? Two vertical lines are flashed in front of you for 30-thousandths of a second; can you tell which one is much longer than the other? There's nothing there that seems to be relevant to the higher thinking powers, or to the complexity of everyday life.

On the other hand, these simple tests have remarkable predictive powers. They correlate strongly with complex cognitive skills such as reasoning. They decline with age, and some argue that their ageing drives the ageing of most other complex mental capabilities. They are also associated with how long people live.

Given this set of facts, one would think that there would be a more co-ordinated research programme on this important and interesting human difference. It interests us. One of us (IJD) has been conducting research on processing speed since his undergraduate dissertation in 1980, and one of us (SJR) has a research fellowship to study it. Indeed, processing speed has been around since the beginning of experimental psychology. When James McKeen Cattell first suggested a battery of ten 'Mental Tests and Measurements' in the journal *Mind* in 1890, two were reaction time tests.[1] However, another remarkable fact about processing speed is how many questions about it are still unanswered, or even largely unaddressed.

The British Academy provided the support to help to correct this. As a part of its series of British Academy Debates on *Ageing*, the debate held in Edinburgh addressed the ageing mind and body. Allied to that successful meeting, the Academy encouraged us to hold a relevant event, run by a young scientist (SJR). So we invited international and national experts to address what we thought were the main questions about processing speed. They accepted; they came. For an intense day, we sat round a table in the Royal Society of Edinburgh's (RSE) Kelvin room, under the benign gaze of Nobel Laureate Peter Higgs's portrait (Figure 1). Here, our 'twelve angry men' – we invited some women, but they could not come – tried to answer our '10 quick questions about processing speed'. Actually, there were twelve psychologists, and Professor James Goodwin from Age UK, who was specially invited to reflect on the practical implications and impact of processing speed research for older people.

Each psychologist gave a short talk on an aspect of processing speed. Their brevity meant that there was much time for discussion. The talks and discussion were recorded, with the aim of our producing a peer-reviewed journal editorial-manifesto for processing speed research, with an emphasis on its relevance to ageing. And in this issue of the *British Academy Review* we aim to provide a pithy statement of the 10 questions and some brief reflections on them. We cannot adequately report the contributions made by the workshop attendees. Instead, we mention them below in association with some important facts and ideas.[2]

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1. J. McKeen Cattell, 'Mental Tests and Measurements', *Mind*, 15 (1890), 373-81.

2. If you would like more detail, one of those attending the workshop – James Thompson – has uploaded the slides from several of the talks and provided a commentary on each on his blog: http://drjamesthompson.blogspot.co.uk

How do we measure processing speed?

As we suggested earlier, there is heterogeneity in how processing speed is measured. There are paper-and-pencil tests, there are button-pressing reaction time tests, and there are lower-level sensory efficiency (psychophysical) tests. A limitation of this variety is that there is no guarantee that these measure the same thing, despite the fact that they all attract the same epithet of 'processing speed'; it is an empirical question as to whether they pick up the same human differences. A strength of all of the types of test used is that, compared with IQ-type tests – with which they are correlated – they appear to be more culture-free. James Thompson and Elliot Tucker-Drob emphasised that tests of processing speed do not seem to be affected by socioeconomic and educational differences in the same way as other intelligence test measures.

Figure 1
The participants at the British Academy workshop 'Is the World Too Fast When We Are Slowing Down?', held at the Royal Society of Edinburgh on 30 April 2014. Standing (left to right): Geoff Der, Thomas Espeseth, Tim Croudace, James Thompson, James Goodwin, Stuart Ritchie (organiser), Paul Verhaeghen, Rogier Kievit, Elliot Tucker-Drob, Ian Deary FBA FRSE. Seated (left to right): Patrick Rabbitt, Mark Bastin, Nicholas Mackintosh FRS. The portrait of Peter Higgs is by Victoria Crowe FRSE.

Should we standardise measurement of processing speed?

An obvious, and scientifically pure, response to there being a Babel of processing speed tests is to aim at standardisation. However, among others at the meeting, Patrick Rabbitt warned us that there is no such thing as a pure psychometric test, one that achieves isomorphism between test score and a single human cognitive capability. This failure of identity between test and mental process has long been a concern of Ian Deary.[3] Thus, some tests of processing speed also assess abilities such as memory and motor performance. Perhaps, then, studies should converge on a small set of consistent measures that are all aimed at measuring the same construct? Some attempts (including by us) have been made to develop free software that would standardise the measurement of reaction time,[4] and this could also be done in future for other processing speed measures. It is Tim Croudace's vision to provide a computer platform that would provide measures of processing speed that would be downloadable by researchers and applied to large cohort studies.

How does speed develop across the life course?

After a vast increase throughout child development up until the age of around 20, many cognitive abilities

decline on average with age. How does processing speed fare in comparison with the others? Tucker-Drob used data from psychometric test standardisation samples to show that processing speed declines more quickly than any other cognitive domain (Figure 2). Geoff Der and Ian Deary showed that, in the large UK-based Health and Lifestyle Study that tested thousands of people from age 18 to over 80, choice reaction time slowed steadily from early adulthood.[5] So, there is good reason to describe ageing as 'slowing down'.

What is the role of speed in intelligence differences?

Do differences in how fast and efficiently the brain can process information associate with differences in 'higher' cognitive abilities, like reasoning, problem solving, and memory? The answer is yes; there are moderately strong correlations between tests like reaction time and sensory processing efficiency and higher-level tests of intelligence. Nicholas Mackintosh warned that we should be wary of the correlation-causation fallacy. Because processing speed is reliably correlated with intelligence does not mean that processing speed underlies intelligence, even if processing speed measures appear to be more 'basic' than the 'higher' cognitive functions tapped by IQ tests. The relation may be the opposite way around, or slower speed and lower intelligence might be caused by a third variable and they may not cause each other. One way of testing causality might be to show that training people

3. I.J. Deary, *Looking Down on Human Intelligence* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000).
4. I.J. Deary *et al.*, 'A Free, Easy-to-use, Computer-based Simple and Four-choice Reaction Time Programme: The Deary-Liewald Reaction Time Task', *Behavior Research Methods*, 43 (2011), 258-68.

5. G. Der and I.J. Deary, 'Age and Sex Differences in Reaction Time in Adulthood', *Psychology and Aging*, 21 (2006), 62-73.

Figure 2
Elliot Tucker-Drob of the University of Texas at Austin presenting findings on age-related changes in cognitive abilities, and emphasising that processing speed begins to decline notably early and strongly compared with other mental abilities.

on processing speed tasks, and improving their speed, leads to more general increases on cognitive tasks. Paul Verhaeghen described some such interventions, which are meta-analysed in his recent book.[6] They show that effects of speed practice are 'local' and do not 'transfer' to other cognitive functions.

What is the role of speed in cognitive ageing?

In a famous paper in 1996, psychologist Timothy Salthouse theorised that how people slowed in their simple processing speed could account for most of the ageing differences in other mental domains.[7] Thus, processing speed was the master mechanism by which much of human cognitive ageing took place. Stuart Ritchie presented results from a large cohort study, showing a high correlation between decline in a very basic measure of speed, visual inspection time, and decline in fluid intelligence.[8] Such data are compatible with speed-as-master-mechanism in cognitive ageing, but are not sufficient to prove it. Tucker-Drob reminded the meeting that most cognitive tasks appear to decline together in old age.[9] This includes processing speed. What is difficult is to show that speed has some privileged causal position among them. It is not enough just to point to the fact that speed tests look simpler than other cognitive tasks. Salthouse's more recent work shows changes in several cognitive domains, and processing speed is just one among them. Speed, then, even for the one-time major speed theorist, has lost its privileged place in the model. On the other hand, Verhaeghen's recent book-length work in collating and meta-analysing processing speed study results does point to a 'general slowing' model that is a good summary of the data. However, a model that allows for more details provides an even better summary.

Generality of speed from senses to central processing?

One question posed was whether people are generally faster or slower in various aspects of brain function. It received little response. It deserves more.

Validity of speed-fractionating theories?

The next three questions are about the foundations of processing speed. It should be admitted that a summary processing speed score – whether that is a test score or a reaction time – is complex. Can we understand its elements? Cognitive psychologists have tried to do this by applying mathematical models to reaction time results to retrieve what they consider to be lower-level parameters that have validity in terms of brain function. Thomas Espeseth was a supporter of this reductionist idea that researchers might gain 'purchase' on the question of processing speed by fractionating processing speed tasks into different components. Getting to a finer-grained level would allow more detailed questions to be asked about the specific biological mechanisms that underlie processing speed. The unanswered question here is whether the mathematically-derived parameters validly reflect aspects of brain processing.

What are the brain foundations of processing speed?

Perhaps it might be better to go to the brain's biology for the foundations of processing speed rather than the way-station of cognitive theories' parameters. Many of the efforts to understand processing speed at the level of the brain have focused on the brain's white matter (its connecting fibres), since it transmits information between regions of the brain that are important for complex thought. Mark Bastin explained that people with healthier white matter tend to have higher intelligence, and this association is largely explained by processing speed.[10] Rogier Kievit described an elegant theoretical perspective he called the 'watershed model'

6. P. Verhaeghen, *The Elements of Cognitive Ageing* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014).
7. T.A. Salthouse, 'The Processing-speed Theory of Adult Age Differences in Cognition', *Psychological Review*, 103 (1996), 403-28.
8. S.J. Ritchie *et al.*, 'A Strong Link Between Speed of Visual Discrimination and Cognitive Ageing', *Current Biology*, 24 (2014), R681-683.
9. E.M. Tucker-Drob, 'Global and Domain-Specific Changes in Cognition Throughout Adulthood', *Developmental Psychology*, 47 (2011), 331-43.

whereby processing speed is an intermediate phenotype between white matter and intelligence, and supported it with complex statistical models.

Genetic foundations of processing speed?

Like all cognitive abilities, variation in processing speed among people is partly influenced by genetic differences. We know this from twin studies, including many at Australia's Queensland Institute of Medical Research, whose population samples have good measures of processing speed. But we do not yet know the specific genes that are involved. Candidate gene studies and genome-wide association studies are currently under way in an attempt to find these specific variants. Deary described some new, yet-to-be published analyses from a large-scale, international consortium project that is seeking the genetic contributions to processing speed involving more than 10,000 subjects.

What are the practical implications of processing speed research?

Does processing speed have a major impact on people's lives? Tucker-Drob reminded the meeting that decline in cognitive abilities, as measured by IQ-type tasks, correlates strongly with decline in 'everyday' abilities such as calculating the right change and following a recipe.[11] Deary asked the meeting: what could be more important a practical outcome than death? Deary and Der summarised their results that had shown that a processing speed measure (choice reaction time) explained two-thirds of the relationship between intelligence and mortality (whereby smarter people tend to die later; Figure 3).[12] This gives the lie to the classic refrain of 'live fast, die young' – the results point in the opposite direction.

We commend James Goodwin – a processing speed ingénue at the start of the workshop – for absorbing so much so quickly, and for providing an elegant closing overview from the point of view of the workshop's knowledge-exchange value for older people. We did eventually open the doors of our RSE room and allow our angry men to leave. We think the meeting did its job. Scientific constructs sometimes need a nudge. Processing speed has so many intriguing findings, as we hint in our 10 questions above, that it deserves to be vindicated or vanquished. In the meantime, it is frustrating to see its relevance to intelligence, ageing, brain health, and death, and yet to see that it is a sideline for researchers rather than their main activity. Psychology is not so flush with good constructs that is can afford to ignore those that have as good a 'nomological network' as does
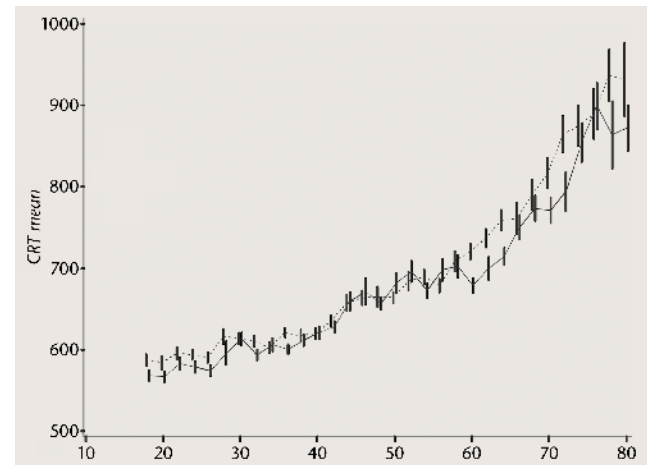
Figure 3
Two powerful demonstrations of the relevance of processing speed. Both are from the UK's Health and Lifestyle Survey (HALS).

The diagram above shows the slowing of choice reaction time (CRT) from age 18 to about 80. (Continuous lines are men and dashed lines are women; vertical lines are standard errors.) Whereas the average 18-year-old takes less than 0.6 of a second to decide correctly which of four numbers was shown on a small screen, the average 80-year-old takes about 0.9 of a second. (From G. Der and I.J. Deary, 'Reaction time age changes and sex differences in adulthood. Results from a large, population based study: the UK Health and Lifestyle Survey', *Psychology & Aging*, 21 (2006), 62-73.)
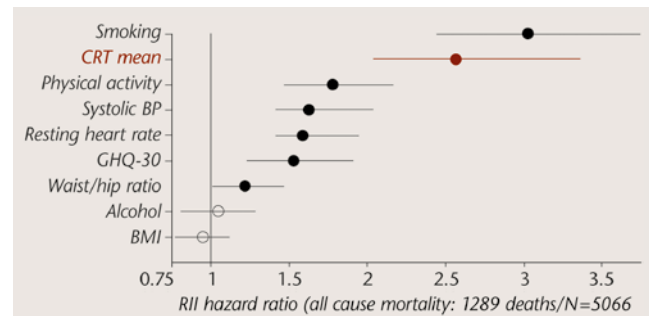
The diagram above shows how strongly the same choice reaction time test (CRT) predicts death in about 20 years of follow-up of about 7000 people in the HALS. (The dots are the 'relative index of inequality' – the strength of the predictor; the horizontal lines are the 95 per cent confidence intervals.) Smoking is the strongest predictor. Choice reaction time comes next, a stronger predictor of mortality than several other, well-known risk factors (BP is blood pressure; GHQ is a self-report questionnaire of psychological distress). A value of 1 on the x-axis means that there is no predictive power, as is seen here for alcohol drinking and body mass index (BMI). Results are adjusted for the age and sex of the participants. (From B.A. Roberts, G. Der, I.J. Deary and G.D. Batty, 'Reaction time and established risk factors for total and cardiovascular disease mortality: comparison of effect estimates in the follow-up of a large, UK-wide, general-population based survey', *Intelligence*, 37 (2009), 561-566.)

processing speed. But it needs integrating as a larger research programme. Those new researchers who buy this classic construct will find that it has had many owners, some more careful than others, but that it is still a good runner.

10. L. Penke *et al.*, 'Brain White Matter Integrity as a neural Foundation for General Intelligence', *Molecular Psychiatry*, 17 (2012), 1026-30.
11. E.M. Tucker-Drob, 'Neurocognitive Functions and Everyday Functions Change Together in Old Age', *Neuropsychology*, 25 (2011), 368-77.
**12**. I.J. Deary and G. Der, 'Reaction Time Explains IQ's Association with Death', *Psychological Science*, 16 (2005), 64-9.

Why English isn't enough: Debating language education and policy

NIGEL VINCENT

Professor Nigel Vincent FBA has just completed his term as the British Academy's Vice-President for Research and Higher Education Policy. A major aspect of his four years of office has been the development of a programme targeting deficits in both Languages and Quantitative Skills in UK education and research.

On 24 June 2014, there was a British Academy/*Guardian* Roundtable on 'Is English Still Enough for Anglophone Countries? An International Debate on Language Education and Policy'. The following article is an edited version of remarks made by Professor Vincent on that occasion, providing an overview of both the issues and the Academy's initiatives.

There was an item in the press a few months ago about a school in Peterborough. From a linguistic point of view Peterborough, almost exactly in the middle of England, is an interesting place. It is right on the edge of a large agricultural area – East Anglia and Lincolnshire – into which a large number of people have migrated in recent waves from eastern Europe, speaking languages like Romanian, Polish and Latvian. It also has a significant community from an earlier phase of immigration into this country from India and Pakistan, whose languages include Punjabi and Gujarati.

It was reported that this school was the first school in England where nobody was a native speaker of English. This tells you something about our mental attitude. Surely, the right thing to say about that school would be that it is the first school in England where every child is bilingual. It is a primary school, so that even if some pupils are not great at English when they enter the school, perhaps because they have been looked after by a grandparent who has spoken to them only in Polish or Punjabi, by the time they come out they will be perfectly fluent in English and as good as anybody else. This would be the positive and constructive way to look at this situation.

That story reveals a problem that we currently have in the United Kingdom: the issue of the command of languages has become identified, to some extent, with the issue of the sense of national identity and with issues about immigration. For example, a recent survey posed the question: 'Can you be English if you don't speak English?' By tying together both the language and the nationality issues, such a question renders more difficult the public discussion of either.

British Academy analysis

The British Academy has taken a number of steps to investigate languages at the national level. Our report *Lost for Words* was launched in the House of Lords in November 2013. That looked at the need for languages specifically in relation to diplomacy, security, policing and the international context of world trouble spots. It diagnosed a gap in our national provision and identified the problems for which solutions are required.

Earlier, in February 2013, the British Academy had published another report entitled *Languages: The State of the Nation*, which sought to survey what the needs are in the UK – which languages? and at what levels? What emerged was that there was a great need both for languages that have not traditionally figured in the British secondary curriculum – such as Arabic, Chinese and Japanese – and also for the languages on our doorstep – the classic ones that were taught when I was at school. These latter include Spanish, French and German, where there has been a notable decline; the decline in German is particularly noticeable. And these needs exist within all kinds of business and industry – complementary to the need within the government, public service and security sectors – and at all levels. Languages skills are required at every professional level from top executives right the way through to people who answer the telephone – a conclusion which agrees with the findings of the Confederation of British Industry.

The question is often asked: Why should young British people worry about learning other languages if everyone else in the world places such an emphasis on the importance of developing a perfect command of English? But I think that is exactly the point. My wife is Danish and I spend a lot of time over there. I find it very difficult to learn Danish because they never let me speak! It's not just that they speak a bit of English; they by and large speak it almost perfectly – certainly well enough
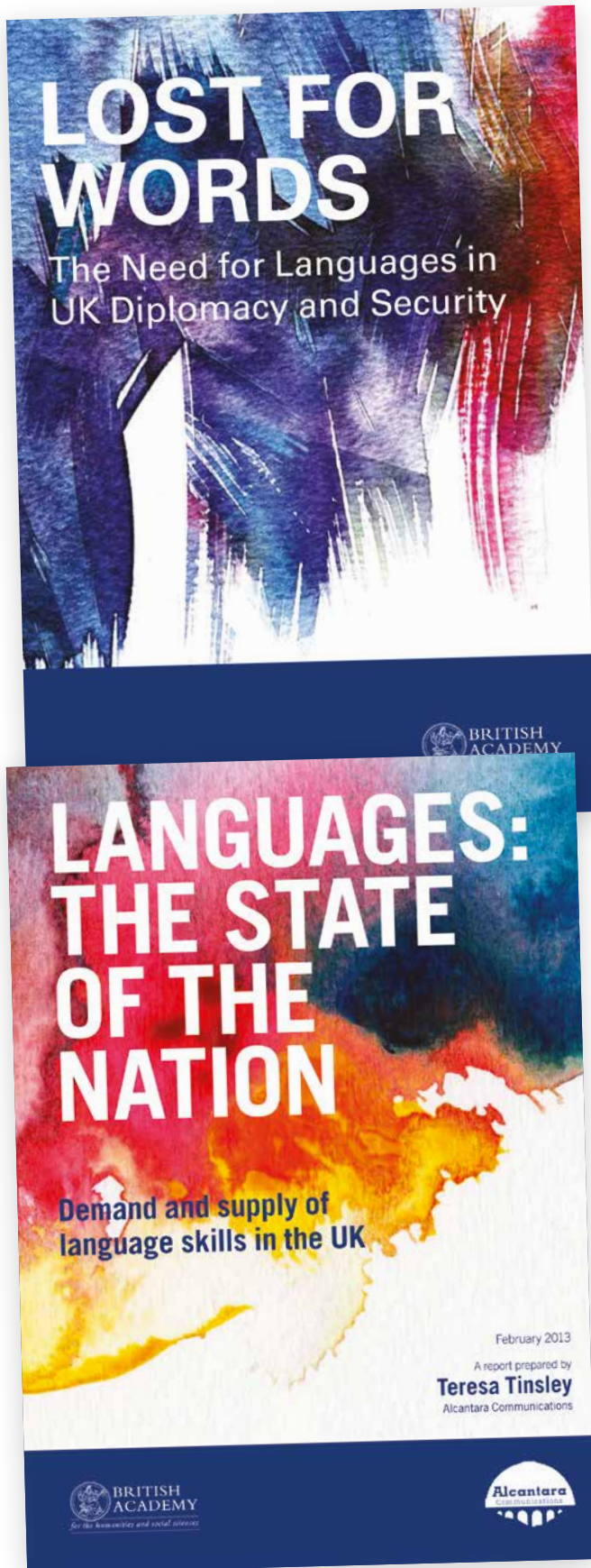
to conduct their professional business with clarity and precision, and without hesitation or confusion. The same goes for many other countries, not just in Europe but in the emerging economies. The issue then becomes: Why would an international business hire a monolingual English speaker when it can hire a bilingual, trilingual or quadrilingual German, Swede, Korean or Chinese? When it comes to international employment, by sitting on our linguistic laurels we disadvantage the United Kingdom. So I would turn the argument on its head: the fact that we have English *only*, whereas others have very good English *plus* ..., means that they are ahead of the game, and we need to catch up.

In short, we know what the problem is. The need now is for solutions. That is the aim of our current project – 'Born Global: Rethinking Language Policy for 21st Century Britain' – chaired by Richard Hardie (non-executive Chair of UBS Ltd).

Educational policy

When we turn to national educational policy, there are tensions that need to be explored, and concerns about the content of the school syllabus and the way in which that feeds through into both higher education and employment. For example, the recent move towards the development of the so-called English Baccalaureate has restored languages to their rightful place as one of the core subjects within the academic curriculum, and thus as a good stepping stone towards university admission. There is however a downside in that languages have tended to retrench back into the private sector of education, with the attendant risk of social stratification between those people who have a command of languages and those who do not. Some means of ensuring proper recognition for advanced qualifications in the many languages spoken in that school in Peterborough would certainly help to rebalance things.

One thing that militates against widening the curriculum is the British tradition of moving from eight, nine or ten GCSEs to only three A-levels in the last two years of secondary school. This is very unusual in the international context. Most educational systems require a broader spread of subjects, and have school-leaving examinations that are more like the International Baccalaureate – requiring a balanced portfolio in which there is room to continue languages together with other essential subjects such as maths, natural sciences, arts and humanities. In sum, we not only need languages to have a place at the heart of the curriculum, but we must find a way to ensure it is possible to continue to study them (and their associated cultures) throughout the school years.

Asset languages

In Britain we have large numbers of different communities who speak a whole range of languages. I have worked for many years in Manchester, where somewhere between 150 and 200 languages are spoken by long-term

To download copies of these two British Academy reports, and to find out more about the 'Born Global' project, go to www.britishacademy.ac.uk/languages

residents of the city. And even a much smaller place like Peterborough runs to over 100. Moreover, many of these languages are, like Kurdish and regional varieties of Arabic, on the list of languages identified in *Lost for Words* as of strategic importance to the UK. Yet we have no developed system for accrediting this knowledge. There was until recently a qualification available under the rubric Asset Languages, so that, if you were a native speaker of say Urdu or Turkish, you could get a qualification outside of the national exam system and have something that you could build on in future work. Yet this has now been discontinued.

I raise this issue not only because it is an important one in the national context, but also because public responses here evince an interesting paradox. It is taken for granted that everybody who leaves school at the age of 16 must take a GCSE exam in English. It is, rightly, deemed unthinkable that school-leavers should not have a qualification in their native language. And yet one hears it said that we should not give people qualifications if they are, say, native speakers of Turkish or Bengali on the grounds that 'It would be too easy for them, because they already speak it.' Well, we already speak English but we still take an exam in it! What is important in developing qualifications for the huge variety of languages that fall under this heading – sometimes called

'heritage languages' – is that attention is paid to the local language contexts. I was recently reading an article by my fellow Italianist, Christina Tortora, who teaches at the City University of New York, in which she makes the very good point that people who are labelled heritage speakers of Italian are often in fact speakers of Sicilian, Venetian, Genoese or whatever regional dialect their parents spoke. Understanding the relation between the standard language and regionally or socially determined varieties should therefore be a key part of language education.

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Let me conclude by underscoring the fact that all the issues I have mentioned here as being central to the national needs of the UK – the value of languages in business, diplomacy and security; the importance of giving languages a central place in the school curriculum; the need to ensure continuity of language learning from primary to secondary to tertiary education; the inseparability of studying language and culture – find their direct equivalents in the USA, as the recent report *Languages For All?* demonstrates. If the Anglophone countries do not find ways to meet these challenges, they risk falling further and further behind in the global race for excellence.

The British Academy has partnered with the *Guardian* to raise the profile of language learning in the UK and celebrate the many benefits of foreign language skills for individuals and society. A major fruit of this was a national Language Festival, held in November 2013. The Festival included the ceremony held at the Academy to award the second round of British Academy Schools Language Awards: pictured above are teachers and pupils from Oldham Sixth Form College receiving the national Award for showing exceptional innovation and determination; they are flanked by the actor Larry Lamb and Professor Marian Hobson FBA. The next Language Festival will be held in October-November 2014: more information can be found via www.theguardian.com/language-festival

Global power, influence and perception in the 21st century

ADAM ROBERTS

The concept of soft power – coined by Joseph Nye, a Fellow of the British Academy – is today a subject of considerable debate, as governments at home and abroad seek to exploit their 'soft power assets' in furthering their foreign policy objectives.

In March 2014, the British Academy published a report on *The Art of Attraction: Soft Power and the UK's Role in the World* (see page 14).

And on 24 June 2014 the Academy hosted a panel discussion on the subject of 'Global power, influence and perception in the 21st century'. The following article is an edited version of remarks made on that occasion by Professor Sir Adam Roberts (President of the British Academy, 2009-2013).

A time of troubles

This is a sobering time in the history of thought about power in general, and soft power in particular. It is especially sobering in relation to attempts to build states on a Western model, which has been the focus of a great deal of international activity, both civil and military, over the two and a half decades since the end of the Cold War.

In Iraq, ISIS (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant) has captured major towns in the north and west of the country, just a few years after formal Western involvement ended there. In Afghanistan, we see deep uncertainty about what will follow the eventual completion of Western withdrawal. In Egypt, a country that has received remarkably high quantities of foreign military and civil aid, we see the emergence of a military regime that does not hesitate to use extremely dubious trials, torture, laws against demonstrations, and general repression, as part of its armoury of restoring stability.

A striking feature of these and many other situations is the limited capacity of Western powers to do anything much about it. Secretary of State John Kerry, when he travels between the countries I have been talking about, invariably pleading for more inclusive government and respect for the rule of law, seems to have relatively little chance of being heeded. In all these countries, where there has been huge Western military involvement – including in Afghanistan, which has been host to the longest war in American history – the Western role looks more and more like Shelley's *Ozymandias*:

And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

The concept of soft power

It is not surprising that awareness of the trouble into which Western roles have been running has been one factor contributing to a new interest in 'soft power'. In British terms, if our uses of armed force have resulted in so many disappointments, should we not be looking at another kind of influence in the world – one that relies more on the extraordinary attractive power of our language, culture, educational system, and parliamentary government?

In considering the role of soft power, we can all agree on one basic proposition. Not all power involves the threat or use of armed force. Both *within* countries in their domestic politics and *between* countries, power can derive from authority, legitimacy, persuasion and consent.

Professor Joseph Nye, a Corresponding Fellow of this Academy, is widely credited with being the inventor of the term 'soft power', which he used from 1990 onwards. He stressed that any exercise of power can involve elements of 'soft power', which is 'the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments'.[1]

It is important, at this sobering moment, to recall that
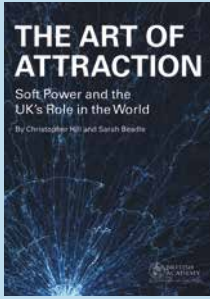
The Art of Attraction
by Christopher Hill and Sarah Beadle

This British Academy report, published in March 2014, concludes with the following list of abbreviated recommendations.

Governments would be well-advised:

1. To refrain from direct interference in soft power assets.

2. To invest in and sustain soft power institutions such as the BBC, the British Council, and the education system over the long term, and at arm's length.

3. To recognise that hard and soft power, like power and influence more generally, reside on a continuum rather than being an either-or choice.

4. To understand that the power of example is far more effective than preaching.

5. To pay careful attention to the consequences of official foreign policy for Britain's reputation, identity and domestic society, ensuring that geopolitical and socio-economic goals are not pursued in separate compartments.

6. To accept that the majority of ways in which civilised countries interact entail using the assets which make up 'soft power', whatever political vocabulary we choose.

7. For their part, citizens and voters need to accept that some hard power assets, in the forms of the armed forces and security services, are necessary as an insurance policy against unforeseeable contingencies, and for use in non-conventional warfare against terrorists or criminals threatening British citizens at home and abroad, although not regardless of cost. Even diplomacy will sometimes need to be coercive (i.e. hard power) in relations with otherwise friendly states in order to insist on the UK's 'red lines', however they may be defined at the time. Because soft power excludes arm-twisting, it will never be enough as a foreign policy resource.

8. Lastly, those engaged in the private socio-cultural activities which contribute to soft power need to be aware that they are to some extent regarded as representative of their country's interests. They need not and should not compromise on such principles as academic or artistic freedom, but it is excessively innocent to imagine that their work takes place in a vacuum, untouched by the manoeuvring of governments and the competing narratives of world politics – especially when they are beholden to the Treasury for funding. Whether they like it or not, the universities, the orchestras, the novelists, the sportsmen and women, the archaeologists – and indeed the British Academy – are all part of the 'projection of Britain abroad'.

Joe Nye and others, in introducing the concept of soft power, did not see it as a complete alternative to military power. Perhaps there would be specific cases where one would have to choose between military power and soft power, but they did not see it is a complete alternative.

The idea that there can be non-military forms of power has also been reflected in the perennial optimistic notions that particular states or groupings of states are 'civilian powers'. In the 1970s, both the European Communities (which later became the European Union) and Japan were sometimes described as pure expressions of 'civilian power'. 'Civilian power Europe' was a phrase that was used quite a lot in the 1980s. By this it was meant that it was primarily concerned with economic activity, had relatively low defence budgets, and was helping to build a world of economic interdependence. Yet that ran into a good deal of criticism as being based on an oversimplification of what the basis of European security actually was and of what policies might be usefully pursued.[2]

Although it may be tempting at this moment in history, it would be wrong to see the ideas of 'soft power' and 'civilian power' as inextricably associated with a recognition of the *limits* of hard power. When these ideas were developed, including from the early 1990s by Joe Nye, it was not at a time of special pessimism about hard power. The Cold War had just ended, and there was a degree of optimism about certain uses of hard power – not least because of the extremely effective use of force in the 1991 Gulf War, which seemed to be an indicator of the capacity to use force on a multinational basis for a limited and legitimate purpose.

Soft power in state-building

The critical issue that faces us today is whether soft power has a significant role to play in respect of the state-building exercises in which the West has become so deeply involved in the post-Cold War era in so many parts of the world.

A good starting point is to recognise that soft power clearly has some role. To take the case of the Balkans and some of the countries in Eastern Europe, there was the enormous attractive power of Western Europe and European models, and of the prospect of becoming members of the European Union. The process can be described, in my view, as one of 'induction', in both senses of the word 'induction'. It was induction into membership of the European Union and of NATO. But it was also induction in the electromechanical sense of a force in one part of the continent having an effect on forces in another part of the continent without direct physical intervention. That seems to me to be clear evidence of a creative role for a certain kind of soft power.

1. Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, Public Affairs, 2004).

2. For two excellent critical views of the concept of 'civilian power Europe' in different eras, see Hedley Bull, 'Civilian Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 21:1-2 (Sep–Dec 1982), 149–64; and Karen Smith, 'Beyond the Civilian Power EU Debate', *Politique Européenne*, 17 (Autumn 2005), 63–82.

But as we approach the subject, we need to recognise three key difficulties.

First, the process of state-building is inherently difficult. Virtually all the conflicts in the world today have the character of being post-colonial conflicts. Creating a new order out of the ruins of an empire is extraordinarily difficult, especially in cases where some local politicians are in danger of being seen as mere puppets of outside forces. That problem, which is an eternal problem of colonialism and post-colonialism, is still very much with us today. The common accusation levelled against outsiders in such a situation is one of 'divide and rule'. It is very common as a left-wing critique of much that has been going on in the recent interventions. Actually, I think it is a complete misreading of what has been going on. It has not been an attempt at 'divide and rule'; it has been an attempt at 'unite and depart'. But uniting a society that may have deep in-built divisions is, in itself, a very difficult task. Time and again, intervening Western powers have found those deep internal divisions are ones that they can scarcely get to grips with.

The second difficulty we should recognise is that the capacity of Western powers to attract – their soft power capacity – has in itself proved to be a problem. Inasmuch as there is enormous attraction – whether it be in the form of Hollywood movies, or women's education and liberation – that very fact can set up antibodies in parts of these societies. It possible to interpret the origins of both the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda as partly being a strong cultural reaction to rapid Westernisation. Our soft power may therefore sometimes involve us in problems. There is something solipsistic about that particular version of soft power in which it is thought that we in the West have the right way of living and of understanding the world and the right kind of political order, and it is merely up to others to copy us. The power to attract could easily be thought to mean that, but it can result in the creation of antibodies.

The third difficulty is well recognised in the British Academy's excellent survey of the soft power debate, *The Art of Attraction* by Chris Hill and Sarah Beadle.[3] The report stresses that, while soft power may indeed be very important for particular national purposes, aspects of it are often at their best when they are not under the baneful control of the state – indeed not under any kind of organised or rigid control.

In sum, soft power is indeed a reality, and will have a key role in hard times, especially in light of the disappointments following certain uses of Western military power in deeply divided post-colonial societies. However, like any other form of power, soft power is neither easy to manage nor free from dangers – especially the dangers that result from lazy assumptions that the rest of the world wants to be more like us, and that it can be transformed without producing antibodies.

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3. The full text of the report can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/intl/softpower.cfm

The British Academy on Scotland

Enlightening the Constitutional Debate

Between January 2013 and March 2014, the British Academy and the Royal Society of Edinburgh held a series of 11 focused events to look deeper into the issues that will affect Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom following the Referendum on Scottish independence, which is due to take place on 18 September 2014.

Each event sought to analyse the effect of constitutional change on a particular policy area: Scotland and the EU; taxation and spending; defence and international relations; the real economy; currency, banking and financial services; culture and broad-casting; borders, immigration and citizenship; science and higher education; welfare and public services; and historical, legal and constitutional issues.

On 8 April 2014, the British Academy and the Royal Society of Edinburgh published *Enlightening the Constitutional Debate*, a book providing a synthesis of the discussions that had taken place at each of these events. Of particular value is the book's Introduction, which offers an excellent summary of what might happen in the aftermath of the Scottish people voting 'yes' or 'no'.

In their joint Foreword, the Presidents of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the British Academy wrote:

'The publication of this report is not intended to influence the outcome of the Referendum in a particular way. Our hope is that it will help to bring the highly informed analysis that characterised the joint series of events to as wide an audience as possible.

'We hope that people will read the information and views contained within these pages, or watch the debates available online, to consider the broad range of views that exist on the question of the UK's constitutional future. The analyses that inform the reports in this book illustrate vividly the issues that will shape the future relationship between Scotland and the other nations of the United Kingdom, whatever decision is made in September.'

To download a copy of *Enlightening the Constitutional Debate*, go to www.britishacademy.ac.uk/scotland
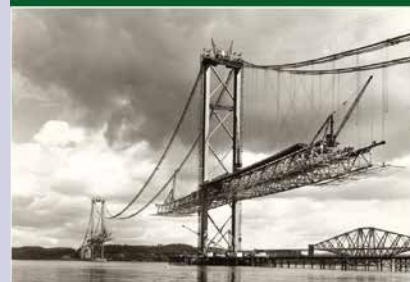
There you will also find links to video recordings and further summary reports of the 11 events.

LECTURES

On 5 December 2013, Professor Dauvit Broun (University of Glasgow) gave the Sir John Rhŷs Memorial Lecture on the subject of 'Britain and the beginning of Scotland'. To watch a video of the lecture, go to www.britishacademy.ac.uk/events/2013

On 18 March 2014, Professor Lindsay Paterson FBA (University of Edinburgh) gave the Sir John Cass's Foundation Lecture on 'Education and Opportunity: Is the UK Departing from a Common Tradition?' To read his article in the Journal of the British Academy, go to www.britishacademy.ac.uk/journal

Treasury Control and Public Expenditure in Scotland, 1885–1979

At a time of intense interest in Scotland's share of public expenditure, a new British Academy volume publishes original government minutes that document the UK Treasury's response to Scottish claims for spending – from the establishment of the Scottish Office in 1885, to the failed referendum for political devolution in 1979.

Regardless of the outcome of the September 2014 independence referendum, the evidence contained in this volume brings important historical context to discussions of Scottish fiscal autonomy. For more on *Treasury Control and Publication Expenditure in Scotland, 1885-1979*, edited by Ian Levitt (*Records of Social and Economic History*, New Series 54), go to www.britishacademy.ac.uk/pubs

A presumption against imprisonment

HARRY WOOLF

On 3 July 2014, the British Academy launched a report entitled *A Presumption Against Imprisonment: Social Order and Social Values*. This article is taken from the report's Foreword, written by the Rt Hon. the Lord Woolf. Harry Woolf was formerly Lord Chief Justice of England, and is an Honorary Fellow of the British Academy.

It was just over 24 years ago that a series of riots of unprecedented gravity erupted in English and Welsh prisons. They started on 1 April 1990. On 6 April 1990 I was appointed by the then Home Secretary, now Lord Waddington, to report on what happened during the six most serious riots, their causes and what should be done to prevent their repetition. Nine months later (in conjunction with Judge Stephen Tumim, the Chief Inspector of Prisons, for the second part) I delivered my report to the then Home Secretary, now Lord Baker.[1]

I have had a deep interest in what is happening in our prison system ever since writing my report. Like many others, I have discovered that the effect of being totally immersed in what is happening within our prisons system, even for a limited period of time, is that you became addicted to what is happening in our prisons.

Today I am still addicted, notwithstanding that, periodically, I find that this addiction causes me acute exasperation. My exasperation arises because, since I delivered my report, there have been very promising developments from time to time within the prison system. They suggested that the system could be about to fulfil its longstanding potential to make a substantial contribution to achieving progress in the criminal justice system. Such developments could have assisted the system to achieve its objective of protecting the public and to fulfil its role, which it summarised in its mission statement (in words that I paraphrase) as:

> serving the public by keeping in custody those committed by the courts, looking after them with humanity and helping them lead law-abiding and useful lives while they are in custody and after release.

1. *Prison Disturbances April 1990* (Cm 1456; London: HMSO, 1991).

My hopes were initially raised after the delivery of my report. In Parliament, both the government and the opposition were in favour of the recommendations that the report made. There was, however, one exception. The government rejected the admittedly contrived recommendation aimed at controlling the number of persons in custody at any particular time by requiring a report to be sent to Parliament if the size of the prison population exceeded the number of prisoners the prisons were intended to accommodate.

The recommendation was important because it was the only method I was able to devise for placing some restriction (not prohibition) on the future size of the prison population, by limiting it to the designated capacity of the prison estate. During the inquiry it was accepted on all sides that overcrowding had been a cancer destroying the ability of the prison system to give effect to its mandate. The reason for this is that overcrowding makes it extremely difficult to take the actions that ensure offenders will return to the community less, and not more, likely to commit further offences. It also interferes with providing offenders in custody with humane conditions. These problems are then exacerbated by the lack of resources caused by the rise in costs of keeping and increasing the numbers of prisoners in custody.

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While there were significant improvements in many aspects of the prison system following my report, this has not been the case with prisoner numbers. After an initial lull in the growth in numbers, the numbers have steadily climbed without any benefit to the safety of the public – apart, that is, from a most welcome reduction in the imprisonment of children and young people under the age of 18. At the date of the report, the size of the prison population was about 44,000 and falling, while by 7 March 2014 it had increased to 84,738.

From time to time there has been legislation which, if implemented successfully, could have at least limited the expansion or even reduced the numbers. But any progress made has been limited in its effect and short-lived.

There has been no sustained effort by either of the principal political parties to tackle the causes of this

growth; rather, supported by elements of the media, they have competed to demonstrate their toughness in response to crime rather than increasing their efforts to limit the numbers undergoing custodial sentences at any one time. One of the worst examples of the sort of inactivity I have in mind concerns those sentenced to indeterminate sentences. Some of those in custody in consequence of such sentences have been in prison much longer than was intended because the machinery to demonstrate that they should be released is so overstretched that it is incapable of dealing with their assessment in adequate time. This is a grave injustice that brings discredit to the justice system of this country.

It is sometimes said by politicians, in answer to criticism of the position of judges, that it is the judges who impose the sentences, not them. As the Chief Justice from 2000 to 2005 and the then Chairman of the Sentencing Guidance Council, I emphatically reject that criticism. The judges have to sentence the individual offender in accord with the framework set by Parliament. The framework has continuously been made more punitive. It is true that often the legislation deals only with a small number of offences, but the inflationary effect of an increase in a sentence, even as to a single offence, has an effect on the length of sentencing across the board. This is because, in deciding on a sentence for one offence, the judge has the task of finding the level of sentence which is just, both having regard to the facts of a particular offence and to sentencing for other offences as well.

Under my Chairmanship, the Council did try to counter these inflationary influences in the guidance we provided, but such efforts came under intense criticism from politicians, as well as the media, endangering the public's confidence in the Council. When devising guidance this reality had to be taken into account. The Council and the judiciary recognised that the public must have confidence in the level of sentencing and that to have failed to respond to the media as opposition could have resulted in damage. Though we appreciated that, it would be wrong to assume the public is in fact as punitive as some politicians and the press think.

Fortunately – and partly, I would like to think, due to the implementations of the recommendations contained in my report for security and control – the Prison Service's ability to deal with disturbances has greatly improved since the Strangeways riots. While there have been an increasing number of recent reports of ominous situations occurring in prisons, control has always been able to be restored without anything happening approaching the scale of the riots 24 years ago.

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What I have written so far describes the unfortunate background against which the value of the new British Academy report, *A Presumption against Imprisonment*, must be considered. Many voices have previously drawn attention to the failures in policy that have occurred and to what could be done to alleviate the situation. We are fortunate in this country in having bodies with the greatest expertise in penal reform of any jurisdiction of which I am aware. Examples of these bodies are the Prison Reform Trust, which I now have the privilege

of chairing, and the Howard League for Penal Reform. But their influence has not been as great as it should have been. What could produce improvements in the situation has been well known for years, but, regrettably, too little attention has been paid to this, and valuable opportunities to make the fundamental changes needed have been missed.

The tragedy is that the increase in the size of the prison population has not achieved an improvement in protection of the public, although in recent times there has been a pleasing reduction in the number of certain crimes. The cost of housing a population of prisoners of the present size is enormous, but, unfortunately, this has not resulted in the reduction in the use of imprisonment, even in the present stringent current financial climate.

The present government has recently proposed placing a new and much needed emphasis on the rehabilitation of offenders. The proposals are contained in the Offender Rehabilitation Act. If this proposal were to be implemented satisfactorily it could mark a significant change of direction, which would be a departure from past failures.

Rehabilitation of prisoners is critical because of the high percentage of offenders, particularly those who have shorter sentences and who, within a very short time of their release, are again before the courts, having committed further offences which are often graver than those that caused them to be imprisoned on a previous occasion.

However, the accepted wisdom is that it is extraordinarily difficult to produce anything positive from short periods in custody, and I am not alone in being concerned as to how this new emphasis on rehabilitation can be implemented successfully in the way proposed. Using short prison sentences as a gateway to rehabilitation may prove attractive to the courts, leading to further inflation of prison numbers as well as a surge in recalls to custody. While I applaud the motives of the Ministry of Justice in promoting their reforms, I fear the fundamental changes to probation involved could cause irretrievable damage to the Probation Service. In addition, I fear there is a danger that the benefits it could offer will be lost in the heightened political controversy, which, on previous form, will overwhelm the debate on tougher sentences in the run-up to the next general election.

Instead of that controversy, what is needed is a re-examination of our penal policies as a whole and the development of a fresh approach that is outside politics. This is an achievement that this exceptional new report could promote. All too often in the past, despite the best endeavours of the bodies committed to reform, their recommendations for change have been discounted as being the usual clamouring of the 'reformers'.

*

The British Academy publication is different. It follows a joint forum of the British Academy and All Souls College, Oxford, in November 2012. It reflects a review of penal policy by a remarkably distinguished group of independent academics outside politics, looking at the subject afresh under the umbrella of the British Academy. It is the first comprehensive report from an

eminent, neutral, national organisation addressing the debate about why and how we imprison so many and for so long, and it highlights why it is vital in the national interest that we reduce their number.

By coincidence, it starts by re-examining the developments over the last 24 years since my report, on which I have already set out my personal reflections. It then gives its independent views, identifies where it considers we have gone wrong and proposes a possible prescription for a cure for the future. Bearing in mind the eminence of its authors, surely its findings and its conclusions should receive the respect they deserve?

The timing of its publication should be peculiarly appropriate: the next general election is approaching and the precedents set by similar periods in the past is that political debate could well descend once again into a competition of claims and counter-claims, designed to demonstrate who can be toughest on crime, irrespective of the consequences in rising costs and an increase in offending.

Anything that can reduce the risks of this happening again, as an objective reading of this report should, deserves to be given a most sympathetic reception. While some readers may not regard all the recommendations it makes as amounting to a perfect antidote to all the present problems, I hope it will be agreed that it does provide an intelligent and objective assessment of what has gone wrong and the possible remedies; that it at least deserves to receive the widest possible attention and discussion. We cannot afford to continue to dissipate our resources in the present unconstructive manner. If anyone has any doubt about this, then this report should expel such doubts. The lessons it spells out have to be learnt and relearnt.
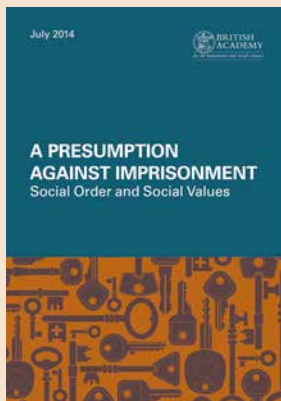
A Presumption Against Imprisonment: Social Order and Social Values

A British Academy report, published 3 July 2014. The full report can be downloaded via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/imprisonment

The following extract is from the beginning of the report's Executive Summary

Imprisonment is a very expensive practice. The financial cost to the public purse can be easily quantified. Alongside this sits a complex mix of further interdependent costs to which it is much harder to attribute a monetary value. These are the human costs faced by those who are imprisoned during their sentence and after their release; the costs faced by their dependents, family and friends; the costs faced by those who work in an increasingly pressured prison system; and the costs to society as a whole.

Data show that, over the last two decades, the use of imprisonment as a form of criminal punishment in England, Wales and Scotland has risen sharply. What is more, our reliance on imprisonment today is acutely out of line with other comparable Western European countries. We have, in a relatively short space of time, come to rely far more heavily than do many other countries on the use of cust-odial sentences as a means of punishing convicted offenders for their offences.

The urgent question therefore raised by this Report is whether we need to rely so heavily on imprisonment as a form of punishment. Do we need to imprison so many people, and to do so for such long periods of time? The Report argues that the answer is no.

Instead, we should presume that in the majority of cases a custodial sentence will not be appropriate – or, in keeping with the title of the Report, that we should operate with a presumption against imprisonment. We do not deny that in some cases sending a person to prison will be the most appropriate response to, and punishment for, the crimes that they have committed. But we make the case throughout the Report that this is not true in the majority of cases. Imprisonment should not be the default sentence handed down. We should instead seek to develop a clear framework for ident-ifying the kinds of case in which imprisonment will be the appropriate sentence.

Lady Ridley's Hospital for Officers at 10 Carlton House Terrace

KAREN SYRETT

During 2014, the British Academy is holding a number of events to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. Further information can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/firstworldwar/

The building that the Academy now occupies played its own significant part in the history of the War – as revealed here by the Academy's archivist, Karen Syrett.

The British Academy moved into 10 Carlton House Terrace in 1998. But for the first 90 years of its life the house was the London home of the Ridley family. Originally built in 1830, the house was remodelled in the French classical style by the 2nd Viscount Ridley in 1905: it was then that the current porch and black marble staircase were installed. The Viscount also commissioned a painted ceiling in the ballroom (now the Lecture Hall).

When war broke out in 1914, Lady Ridley (Figure 1) decided to open up her London home as a Hospital for Officers. On the first floor, the ballroom and the south drawing room (now the Mall Room; Figure 2) were converted into wards. The Red Cross roll of hospitals for January 1915 records Lady Ridley's hospital as having 25 occupied beds. As the war progressed, Lady Ridley made more room available by moving out a lot of furniture and pictures. By 1917, further rooms on the ground floor (Figure 3) and first floor had been converted into wards, and huts had been built on the terrace, taking the total of beds to 60. There was also an operating theatre on the ground floor.

Aileen Maunsell, volunteer nurse

The Hospital was affiliated to Queen Alexandra's Military Hospital in Millbank, and was principally a convalescent hospital for wounded officers. Members of London/52 Voluntary Aid Detachment (VADs) provided the nursing care. VADs – who have been portrayed in the recent BBC television series *The Crimson Field* – were trained in first aid and home nursing and worked alongside qualified nurses. One of the VAD nurses who worked at Lady

Figure 1
Lady Rosamond Ridley. All the images in this article are taken from Aileen Maunsell's scrapbook or diaries, and are reproduced courtesy of Hugo Gell.

Ridley's was Aileen Maunsell (Figure 4). Aileen was 19 when war broke out and, like many upper-class girls her age, she quickly volunteered to attend home nursing courses and become a nurse. In her diary, she records her first day at the hospital:

Thursday 3 June 1915 – Off at 8.30 by taxie to nurse at Lady Ridly's Hospital 10 Carlton House Terrace. Put in Long Ward with Sister Bell & Nurse Paice 8 patients. 3 bad stretcher cases & 1 bad arms. Off from 2 to 4, got Red X uniform at Harrods. Dead beat by 8.30.

Figure 2
Nurses and patients in the South Drawing Room (now the Mall Room).

Figure 3
Ward in the Dining Room on the Ground Floor.

The British Academy is very grateful to Aileen's grandson, Hugo Gell, who has provided access to her diaries and scrapbook.[1] These resources offer a rich and fascinating insight to the life of the hospital. On 19 January 1916, Aileen attended her first operation: 'At 8. went to opperation on Capt Dodds til 8.25 when retired as very giddy to recover in the office! Finger was cut off & Right Hand stretched.' Her diary entry for the following day records that Capt Dodds was 'very cheerful in spite of operation; beastly finger bottled!' Those early signs of queasiness quickly vanished: by 1917 Aileen was happily dealing with one patient who 'had lungs pumped by Doctor Wingfield. Operation on ward – got 12oz pusy blood out'; and another who had a splint removed from his leg, 'had to clean it after, wads of skin peeling off.'

Bandages and breakfast trays

Lady Ridley's Hospital bore testament to the realities of the Great War. Many of the soldiers who were brought to 10 Carlton House Terrace had suffered life-changing injuries. Amongst men who had experienced terrible wounds were those who had also lost limbs. Soldiers who had inhaled poison gas were kept in huts built on the terrace, in the hope that fresh air would be good for their lungs (Figure 5). Others suffering from shell-shock were tended by 'special' nurses in a small quiet ward.

Aileen's work at the hospital was varied to say the least. She took the dressings to be sterilised at St Thomas's Hospital, she bathed and fed the patients and took their temperatures, she cleaned the wards and made the beds. She learnt how to 'work electricity' on patients and how to deal with haemorrhages. In January 1916, she records the outbreak of a manicuring craze which lasted for several days: 'Busy morning – manicured folk.'

Aileen also spent a lot of her time chatting and laugh-

Figure 4
Aileen Maunsell, known as 'Dinkie', at 10 Carlton House Terrace.

ing with the patients, and was no doubt involved in concocting many of the nicknames given to the nurses and soldiers: hers was Dinkie. The young convalescents were often bored and therefore boisterous, but it is clear from her diaries that Dinkie was more than capable of giving as good as she got:

Thursday 11 October 1917 – Great rag in evening, pillow fights ... sponges, cushions, pillows & paper flying. I upset all Mr Walton's water by mistake unfortunately – Sis[ter] Jones furious. All blew over though in the end.

When Aileen slipped coming down the black marble staircase a few days later, she sprained her ankle and had to go home for a few days. The event was recorded in a poem that one of the patients wrote in her scrapbook:

Last week our Dinkie fell down stairs...
The North Ward all dissolved in tears
When they heard the news.
Young Duncan was disconsolate
And Barry got the blues.
Life is weary, life is sad
What shall we do without her
It's only 'cos I feel so bad
I write this song about her.

And she could also be clumsy when it came to delivering their breakfast trays: in another poem, a patient teases her about spilling the porridge and dropping the fish.

The Bell-Irvings

Two sons of a Scottish-Canadian industrialist ended up at Lady Ridley's on more than one occasion. Duncan and Malcolm Bell-Irving were both pilots who bounced back from one injury only to be shot down again. When they were first admitted in 1915, their father and sister Isabel visited them at the hospital. Isabel decided that she too would like to do her bit for the war effort and so volunteered as a nurse. In one of her letters, she describes 'the boys' on her ward:

They vie with one another to have the most ridiculous toy mascots. One man has a huge monkey whose arms and legs and head can be manoeuvred into amazing shapes. I suppose when you think about it, they have to be silly, otherwise it would just be too ghastly. A Captain Taylor had a double amputation and I was worried about him. He said, "Cheer up B-I, I've always wanted to be a shorty!"[2]

Visitors and shows

Lady Ridley's Hospital quickly established itself as 'by far the most fashionable hospital for officers in the war'.[3] As a result, the hospital was constantly busy. Armfuls of fresh flowers would regularly arrive from Lady Rothschild, and grateful ex-patients would send in 'quantities of chocolates and strawberries'. There was a steady stream of visitors which included family and friends as well as off-duty nurses and former patients. On 8 June 1918, Rudyard Kipling popped in to see one of the nurses and her patient. Royalty would also drop by. Isabel wrote:

Queen Alexandra comes to visit quite often. She speaks with a heavy accent. She is kindness itself, but often the

Figure 5
Nurses and patients, outside the huts built on the terrace that overlooks the Mall. On one occasion, the huts themselves became a hazard. In one of her letters, Nurse Isabel Bell-Irving wrote: 'We had a fire here – the tar paper between the corrugated iron roof of one of the huts caught on fire and spread to a ward inside. All the cases in that ward are femur cases and they couldn't move. Luckily there are French doors, so all the men could be wheeled out on the terrace. Everyone who could formed a bucket brigade.'

Figure 6
Home entertinment in one of the wards. On 12 September 1917, Aileen records a concert in the North Ward: 'Wales sang National anthem in Welsh, Col sang Somewhere a Voice is calling, the Major played, Mr Paget on the mandaline, & self Chopin Etudes. Went on till 10. All in bed 10.30.'

2. A biography of Duncan Bell-Irving by his daughter Elizabeth O'Kiely, *Gentleman Air Ace* (published 1992), draws on correspondence and accounts written by Duncan and his sister Isabel. All of the Bell-Irving quotations used in this article are taken from that book.
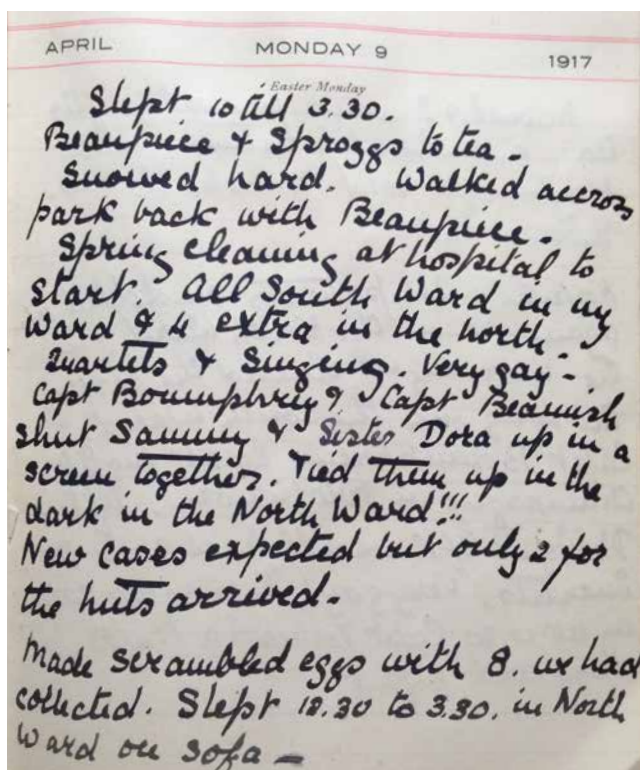**3**. Newspaper clipping in Muriel Butler's scrapbook.

Figure 7
Diary entries for early April 1917 reveal Aileen Maunsell to be practising some 'quartets' to perform for the patients. But the entry for Monday 9 April shows how a performance could degenerate into misbehaviour. 'Quartets & singing. Very gay – Capt Boumphrey & Capt Beamish shut Sammy & Sister Dora up in a screen together. Tied them up in the dark in the North Ward!!!'

men can't understand her and they are just getting comfortable when she arrives and puffs up their pillows. Sometimes when they know she's coming they pretend to be asleep

The hospital soon became a popular sightseeing spot. A newspaper clipping from the period states that 'every morning an interested crowd collects [along the Mall] to see the public shaving of the wounded soldiers, who are so comfortably situated in the temporary hospitals which are perched on the top of the terraces behind Carlton House Terrace'.[4]

The more mobile patients would often go out for tea or a trip around the park, and some of them would occasionally go to the theatre for a matinee performance. Mr Williams got into numerous scrapes when he was out and about in his wheelchair; on one occasion he got tangled up in a crowd at the Lord Mayor's show, and ended up being escorted down the street by a policeman – according to Aileen's diary there was 'much cheering from everyone'.

In the evening, there were regular concerts. Sometimes the patients would provide the entertainment (Figure 6). Aileen herself was a very accomplished pianist – prior to the war she had spent time in Dresden studying music;

4. Newspaper clipping in Muriel Butler's scrapbook.

she spent many of her evenings playing for the patients, and her musical talents were greatly appreciated (Figure 7). But on other occasions people from outside would come in: 'Madame & 3 pupils came & sang & sang. Good voices but very sentimental'. In January 1916 'a Miss Jones played rag-times. Danced behind the screens with Capt Dodds and Mr Bell Irving!!!'

When there wasn't a concert to distract them, the young patients would try to concoct an excuse for a party. Duncan Bell-Irving recalled:

> When Dr Wyatt came to the drawing room, I said brightly, 'What about a birthday party tonight – you know, champagne and oysters from Mrs Lewis's'. Dr Wyatt looked around the ward. There were ten beds and at the time all their occupants were more or less cheerful. 'Right! You may have your oysters. But no more birthdays for at least a week.'

Aileen records that for one Captain's last night at the hospital, there was 'champagne in profusion. After Dr Wyatt left we all had some … Very gay!'

Tensions and romance

Although many friendships were formed amongst the nurses and patients at Lady Ridley's hospital, there were times when personalities clashed. In August 1916, Aileen described one nurse as: 'Very condescending, ought to be squashed!!' On another occasion, Aileen writes about two nurses who 'are not working well together, going to be trouble.' In September 1917 her diary entry records a particularly bad day:

> On duty 8.30. Very tired. Sister bad tempered to start with. Awful row over Mr Rae's eye. I took off the bandage as Mr Hudson ordered. Broke my specs to crown all & had to sit up with Sister still glowering till 3.

However, most of the time, it seems that everyone got on well together with many friendships continuing outside the confines of the hospital. Aileen became especially friendly with the Bell-Irving family – indeed, she briefly became engaged to Duncan Bell-Irving. Duncan was admitted to the hospital for the third time on 4 October 1917 following a flying accident. Aileen, who was working in the North Ward at the time, records that the next day he was 'moved from the Dining Room to North Ward. Hooray!' Duncan remained at the hospital until the end of January 1918 when, patched up but with a permanent limp, he was able to leave to resume his responsibilities at the flying school in Gosport. On the 27 February 1918, Aileen wrote:

> Met Duncan – R.A.C. Lunch with him & Mr Bell-Irving Hyde Park Hotel. Photographed in park. Home together – gave me the ring.

Later that day she returned the ring, but does not record why. She simply says: 'Very miserable'.

Later in the year, a young soldier called Philip Gell

arrived at the hospital. Aileen didn't write very much about Second Lieutenant Gell during what remained of the war years. But on 16 November 1920 they would marry at the Parish Church in Paddington.
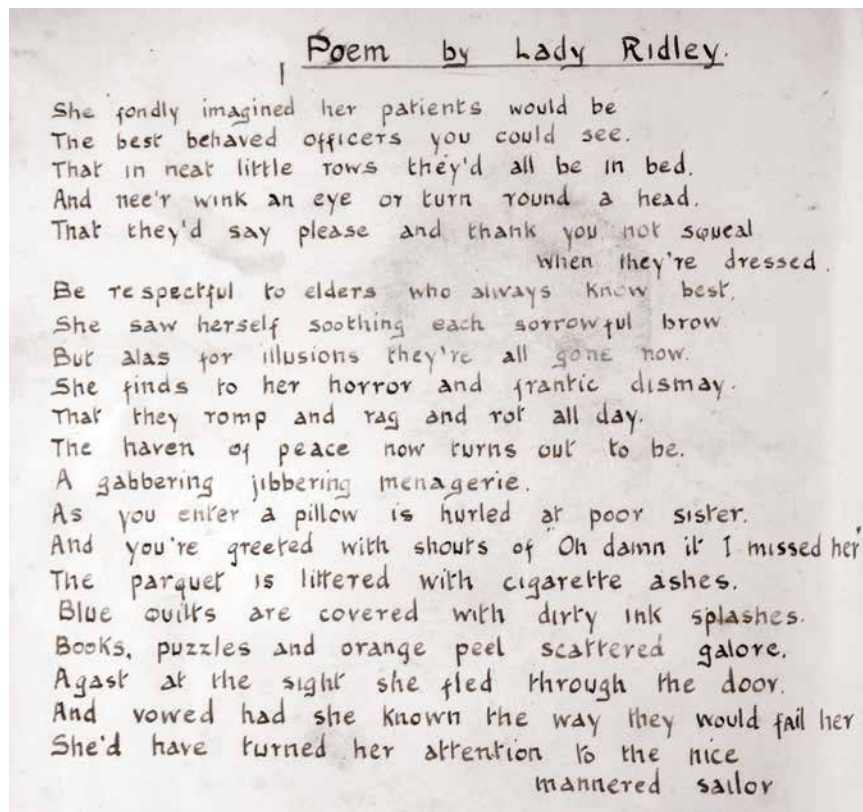
All fighting ceased

On 11 November 1918, an armistice was declared. Aileen describes the 'Wild rush down the Mall to Buckingham Palace' and writes that 'Lady Ridley gave all carnations & flags.' Although the war was over, the Hospital remained open until February 1919. Lady Ridley's gracious generosity was recognised in 1918 when, as donor and administrator of the Hospital, she was made a Dame. Upon the Hospital's closure, she wrote to express her own gratitude to those who had worked there: 'it is largely owing to the devoted band of V.A.D's that the hospital achieved such a standard of efficiency and comfort, and was able to bring such a great measure of relief and happiness to those who suffered so much in the War'.[5] Aileen's scrapbook includes a poem that echoes Lady Ridley's appreciation of the VAD:

> The smile on her face, and the look in her eye,
> Was sufficient to cheer you, though ready to die.
> The way that she did things, the way that she walked,
> The way that she smiled, and the way that she talked,
> Were more good to her patients than physic or dope;
> If you were depressed she would fill you with hope

Exhibition

From the beginning of September to the end of November 2014, the British Academy will be holding a small exhibition of photographs from Aileen Maunsell's scrapbook and diaries, together with reproductions from Lady Ridley's own photograph album.

Items will include the poem above from Aileen Maunsell's scrapbook. It is unknown whether this poem was written by Lady Ridley, or by a patient imagining what Lady Ridley must be thinking.

Poem by Lady Ridley.

She fondly imagined her patients would be
The best behaved officers you could see.
That in neat little rows they'd all be in bed.
And nee'r wink an eye or turn round a head.
That they'd say please and thank you not squeal
                    when they're dressed.
Be respectful to elders who always know best.
She saw herself soothing each sorrowful brow.
But alas for illusions they're all gone now.
She finds to her horror and frantic dismay.
That they romp and rag and rot all day.
The haven of peace now turns out to be.
A gabbering jibbering menagerie.
As you enter a pillow is hurled at poor sister.
And you're greeted with shouts of Oh damn it I missed her.
The parquet is littered with cigarette ashes.
Blue quilts are covered with dirty ink splashes.
Books, puzzles and orange peel scattered galore.
Agast at the sight she fled through the door.
And vowed had she known the way they would fail her
She'd have turned her attention to the nice
                    mannered sailor

The First World War at the British Academy

The British Academy is holding a range of events relating to the First World during 2014. A list of the events, linking to recordings where available, can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/firstworldwar

Professor Jay Winter's lecture 'Shell Shock and the Emotional History of the First World War', given on 9 July 2014, included a clip from the 1919 French film *J'accuse* showing a shell-shocked soldier's vision of the war dead rising from their graves.

5. RAMC/555, Wellcome Library.

Gertrude Bell and Iraq: A life and legacy

PAUL COLLINS

In September 2013, the British Academy and the British Institute for the Study of Iraq (Gertrude Bell Memorial) held a conference on 'Gertrude Bell and Iraq – A Life and Legacy'. This article by Dr Paul Collins, a Council Member of the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, draws on remarks made by Professor Charles Tripp FBA at the conclusion of the conference.

No woman in recent time has combined her qualities – her taste for arduous and dangerous adventure with her scientific interest and knowledge, her competence in archaeology and art, her distinguished literary gift, her sympathy for all sorts and condition of men, her political insight and appreciation of human values, her masculine vigour, hard common sense and practical efficiency – all tempered by feminine charm and a most romantic spirit.[1]

With the end of the First World War, the lands of the vast Ottoman Empire were partitioned, and the League of Nations granted to Great Britain mandate authority over the territory of Mesopotamia. Here, within a few years, the British had established an Iraqi monarchy and the Iraqi state. In group photographs of the British diplomats who determined this new political shape of the Middle East, both at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 and the Cairo Conference of 1921, there appears a solitary female, her slim figure resplendent in furs and a voluminous hat (Figure 1). This is Gertrude Bell, one of a small group of imperial officials whose influence went far beyond their roles as colonial advisors. She remains a controversial figure, especially in the context of the founding of the modern state of Iraq. Even today, 'Miss Bell' is a name that for many Iraqis either conjures an image of a more innocent age when their country was born out of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, or personifies the attitudes and decisions that have created a divided Middle East mired in repeated military occupations and conflict.
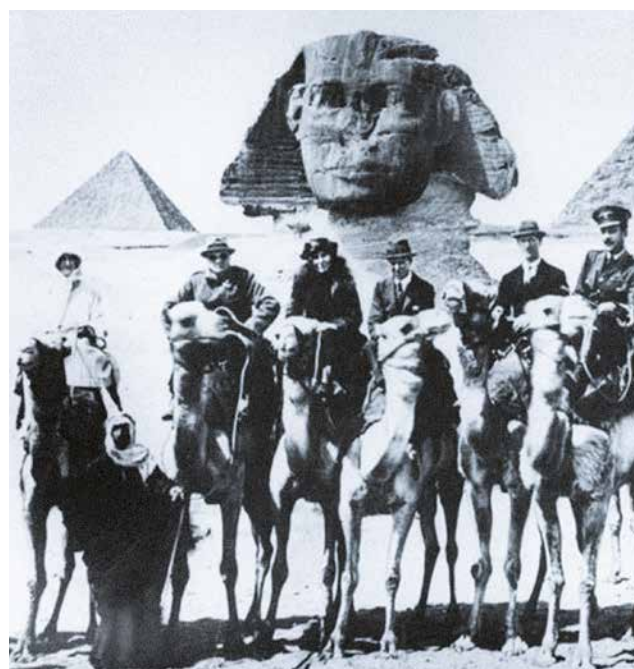

Figure 1
Gertrude Bell on a camel in front of the Great Sphinx of Giza, at the time of the Cairo Conference in 1921. Winston Churchill is to the left of her, and T.E. Lawrence to the right.

Focus

In September 2013, the British Academy and the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, in association with the Gertrude Bell Archive at Newcastle University, organised an international conference to explore the life of Gertrude Bell with the aim of a fuller understanding of her life and legacy, especially in regard to Iraq. Focusing on Bell it was possible to begin to see how she – and the British administration – understood Mesopotamia, and how these understandings were to shape their state-building project in the country that was to become Iraq. It also highlighted the processes that were set in motion as a result of this project, leading to an intimate and often violent intertwining of British and Iraqi histories: it is worth remembering that the 2003 occupation of

1. D.G. Hogarth, 'Obituary: Gertrude Lowthian Bell', *The Geographical Journal*, 68/4 (1926), 363–368.

Iraq was the third invasion of the country by British forces during the past century.

Gertrude Margaret Lowthian Bell (1868-1926) has proved an attractive subject for modern biographers. They are helped by the fact that she was not only a public figure, responsible for generating reports, memos and letters as part of her official duties, but was also an indefatigable letter writer, as well as author of a number of books describing her travels, impressions and encounters. What especially appeals for many of those who write about Gertrude Bell is that she was able to achieve so many things as a woman. Bell refused to be constrained by the expectations of the day for women of her rank: she was able to succeed in the 'man's world' of high politics and diplomacy through her imperialist politics, her class entitlement, and her forceful personality.

Figure 2
Gertrude Bell on horseback at Kubbet Duris, Lebanon, 1900. Photo: courtesy of the Gertrude Bell Archive at Newcastle University (archive reference A-340).

Background

Born into a family of wealthy entrepreneurs of the industrial revolution in what was then County Durham, Gertrude Bell received her early education in London. At the age of 17 she entered Lady Margaret Hall, University of Oxford, and left two years later having graduated with a first-class degree in Modern History. Thereafter her family's money enabled her to travel extensively overseas, in particular throughout the Middle East. It was the experience and knowledge gained on these journeys that would establish Gertrude Bell's later authority. She would be the only senior member of the Mesopotamian Administration to have had any significant experience of the Ottoman Empire before the First World War. Bell journeyed to various parts of the region. Beginning with a visit to Iran in 1892, she spent the years 1899-1900 in Palestine and Syria (Figure 2), describing her experiences in *The Desert and the Sown* (1907) and *Amurath to Amurath* (1911).

Archaeology

It was especially Bell's interest and involvement in the archaeology of the Middle East that shaped her approach not merely to the understanding of vanished civilisations, but also to the peoples and societies that she encountered in her travels. She undertook a detailed study of Byzantine churches in central Anatolia and, with William Ramsay, produced what remains a key study, *The Thousand and One Churches* (1909). It was, however, at the ancient city of Ashur on the Tigris River in north Mesopotamia that she witnessed cutting-edge excavations by a team of German archaeologists under the leadership of Walter Andrae (Figures 3, 4). The systems of

archaeological recording that Bell encountered at Ashur would inform her own seminal work, *Palace and Mosque at Ukhaiḍir: A Study in Early Mohammadan Architecture*, which was published in 1914 to much praise.

By the time that Bell was undertaking and publishing her archaeological work, European explorers had already excavated substantial evidence for Mesopotamia's rich and complex past, with many of the most impressive artefacts and written documents transported to museums lying at the heart of the imperial capitals. In the early decades of the 20th century, the focus of scholarship on this material had narrowed from a study of the ancient civilisations and empires to that of their peoples, who were understood invariably in terms of race. The Assyriologist Thorkild Jacobsen describes the prevailing intellectual climate of the time:

> There was a virtual unanimity about what had shaped early Mesopotamian history, it was race, Sumerians fighting Semites. Races differed in physique and in character, so cranial measurements, shapes of noses, and even bearded or beardless were matters of moment.[2]

The search was on for what was perceived to be the very essence of nations, races and civilisations as the way to reveal their past; Gertrude Bell was part of this endeavour. Thus, Bell was enchanted by a belief that in the tribal peoples of Syria and Arabia she had discovered something uncorrupted by her own industrial civilisation, something true and timeless. For these same reasons, she was dismissive of the urban societies of the Arab Middle East, regarding them as unsuccessful

2. Thorkild Jacobsen, 'Searching for Sumer and Akkad', in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jack M. Sasson (New York, 1995), volume 4, p. 2747.

Figure 3
Panoramic photograph of Ashur taken by Gertrude Bell.

hybrid cultures, split between a kind of modernity and a timeless 'Orient'. Equally, it is significant that, like many of her contemporaries, Bell repeatedly speaks not of Arabs, Turks and Kurds, but of 'the Arab', 'the Turk' and 'the Kurd', suggesting thereby that there was an essential type which, once uncovered and excavated would unlock a true understanding of the motives, preferences and worldviews of all Arabs, Turks and Kurds.

Politics

This was to become the basis on which Bell and other imperial officials viewed and dealt with the populations of Mesopotamia after the British invasion and occupation during the First World War. Gertrude Bell's intimate knowledge of the region and its tribes made her an obvious target of British Army Intelligence, and in 1915 she was assigned to its headquarters in Cairo. The following year, Bell was sent to Basra (which British forces had captured in November 1914), to advise Chief Political Officer Percy Cox. When British troops took Baghdad in March 1917, she was relocated there with the title of 'Oriental Secretary'. Gertrude Bell would be among a select group of 'Oriental' officials at the Cairo Conference of 1921, where it was decided to end the unpopular Mandate over Mesopotamia (a full scale insurgency had broken out the previous year) and that Prince Faisal (son of Husain, the Sharif of Mecca and King of the Hijaz) should become king of a newly created Kingdom of Iraq.

Figure 4
Gertrude Bell dining with the German expedition team in the Ashur dighouse in 1911. Photos: courtesy of the Gertrude Bell Archive at Newcastle University (archive references Q_220 and Q_225).

Faisal was Bell's preferred choice. A descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, Faisal represented for her the essential and resolute Arab tribal leader, while the nationalism he espoused could be viewed as a force that would allow the Arabs, as she understood them through her archaeological work, to re-emerge in the narrative of world history. In contrast, Bell disliked thoroughly the conservatism of Iraq's Shi`i clerical hierarchy and described the Kurds as 'ungovernable'. These views – many of which she shared with other British officials as shown by their selection of Sunni Arab elites for appointments to government and ministry offices – had a fateful and lasting effect on the organisation of power and privilege in the Iraqi state, setting in motion processes of inclusion and exclusion that were to mark Iraqi politics for decades to come.

Museum

During the last years of her life, Gertrude Bell returned to archaeology, including developing Iraq's first national museum. She devoted much time and energy in searching for a place to store the flood of antiquities coming from the many European and American excavations taking place across the new country; it was only a few months before her death in July 1926 that Bell managed to secure the co-operation of British and Iraqi officials to ensure that a building for a permanent museum was found. Of equal concern was the need to regulate the archaeological excavations as well as the illicit trade in antiquities. Bell's proposed legislation was a hybrid that addressed and protected both Iraqi and British interests. In many ways, the hybridity of this work helps to define Gertrude Bell: she was both an Iraqi nationalist and a British imperialist, and sought to reconcile the two. Examining the tensions inherent in such a position helps our understanding of the origins of the current forms of power in Iraq as well as perhaps the implications for the future.

It is intended that essays derived from the conference will be published in due course in a volume in the *Proceedings of the British Academy* series.

The making of modern slavery: Whose interests are served by the new abolitionism?

JULIA O'CONNELL DAVIDSON

Julia O'Connell Davidson, Professor of Sociology at the University of Nottingham, was one of the convenors of a British Academy Conference on 'Slaveries Old and New: The Meaning of Freedom', held on 27-28 March 2014.

Humanitarian feeling

In a book exploring the European popular culture of abolitionism in the 18th century, Adam Lively observes that the sentimental literature it generated spoke much more closely to the preoccupations of its white audience than it did to those of the enslaved. It knitted slavery together with the emerging idea of race to produce an empty and one-dimensional view of 'the African' as primarily defined by his enslaved condition and his suffering. In so doing, it provided its audience with an opportunity to examine and cultivate their own more rarefied feelings, sensibility being 'exemplified by the ability to suffer along with the suffering of others'.[1] This emphasis on suffering left a complicated legacy for humanitarian activism. For even though the 18th-century abolitionist movement was the first to articulate moral concern for the sufferings of geographically remote strangers, its sentimental tropes and figures produced an unstable and moveable vision of who should be the focus of humanitarian concern. As Lynn Festa has argued, sentimentality:

> operates on an ad hoc basis, selectively exciting feelings about particularly moving examples of suffering and recognizing those subjects exclusively based on the fact

of that suffering… the subject produced by sentimental antislavery is granted only a diluted form of humanity grounded in pain and victimhood, a humanity that is only as enduring (or as fleeting) as the recognition of the metropolitan subject who bestows it.[2]

This is highly pertinent to the contemporary discourse of humanitarian concern about modern slavery.

Slavery occupies a prominent place on the political agenda today. Home Secretary Theresa May's Modern Slavery Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech in June 2014; in the United States, President Barack Obama proclaimed January 2014 as National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. This interlacing of the terms 'trafficking' and 'modern slavery' produces an extremely broad appeal to humanitarian feeling. Those involved in campaigns against trafficking and modern slavery include politicians from across the political spectrum, and religious leaders from across the faiths. Trades unions are there, but so too are big businesses. The Global Business Coalition Against Human Trafficking (gBCAT), includes Coca-Cola, ExxonMobil, Ford, Microsoft and ManpowerGroup amongst its members. As its co-founder David Arkless put it, 'When you get involved in something like this your employees will love it, the public will love it and your shareholders will love it.'[3] Famous actors and rock stars are also there 'lovin' it', contributing to what Dina Haynes terms, 'the celebrification of human trafficking',[4] and lending their support to the many NGOs that exhort 'ordinary' folk, especially the young, to join the struggle against modern slavery.

In February 2008, at a major UN conference on human trafficking in Vienna attended by A-list celebrities as well as representatives from governments, NGOs and

1. A. Lively, *Masks: Blackness, Race and the Imagination* (London, Chatto and Windus, 1998).

2. Festa, 'Humanity without feathers', *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights*, 1:1 (2010), 3-27.
3. O. Balch, 'Corporate initiative can play a major role in anti-trafficking movement', *Guardian* (3 April 2013) www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2013/apr/03/human-trafficking-global-business-coalition
4. D. Haynes, 'The celebrification of human trafficking, Part III' (2013) http://traffickingroundtable.org/2013/05/celebrification-of-human-trafficking-part-iii/

At the British Academy Conference on 'Slaveries Old and New', Professors Tommy Lott, Charlotte Sussman, and Nandita Sharma discuss the overlaps between different systems of domination and their cultural representation.

international agencies, Antonio Maria Costa, head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, described the event as something between the World Economic Forum at Davos and the 1960s music festival Woodstock – 'This is not an inter-governmental conference, nor is it a talk shop', he said. 'Think of it more as a rally. We march together'. Costa continued – '200 years after the end of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, we have the obligation to fight a crime that has no place in the 21st Century. Let's call it what it is: modern slavery.'[5] But what exactly is 'modern slavery'?

Trafficking

The roots of states' interest in the issue can be traced back to the 1990s, when there was growing anxiety amongst governments (especially those of Western liberal states) and supranational institutions about what came to be termed 'transnational organised crime'. In the context of more porous borders in the post-Cold War era, state actors worried about a perceived expansion of illegal markets, both domestic and global, viewing this as a threat to the legitimate economy and to political institutions. They were also concerned about their own capacity to control immigration (including but not limited to the mobility of criminal actors across national borders), which was perceived as a threat to national sovereignty and security. 'Human trafficking' first entered into policy consciousness through the lens of these concerns, not through a preoccupation with humanitarian problems. Hence it was parcelled up with phenomena such as smuggling, money laundering, and drug and gun running, and addressed through the United Nations *Convention on Transnational Organized Crime* (2000) and its three additional protocols (one on trafficking, one on smuggling, and one on firearms), not through a convention on human rights.

The UN Trafficking Protocol provided a somewhat flexible and vague definition of 'trafficking' not as a single, one-off event, but a *process* (recruitment, transportation and control) organised for purposes of

exploitation which takes place over time and can be organised in a variety of different ways. 'Exploitation' was not explicitly defined, but 'shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs'. In other words, in international law, slavery is just one of a number of possible outcomes of what is termed trafficking, even though in the political rhetoric surrounding trafficking, trafficking is said to *be* modern slavery.

Despite the loose definition of trafficking, policy-makers have always insisted that it is a phenomenon quite distinct from smuggling (and many anti-slavery NGOs accept this assertion). Smuggling and trafficking are imagined as processes that may overlap in initial stages of movement, but that become clearly differentiated at the point of destination. Relations between smuggler and smuggled are said to end on arrival at the point of destination, whereas the trafficker continues to exercise control over the trafficked person. Furthermore, according to the Home Office, where trafficking is held to be 'carried out with the use of coercion and/or deception', smuggling is described as 'a voluntary act on the part of those smuggled'.

In the run up to the drafting of the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols, and immediately thereafter, politicians and policy-makers were fond of remarking that 'Smuggling is a crime against the state, trafficking is a crime against a person'. Then came 9/11, read as an even more direct and deathly threat to Western liberal democracy than 'organised crime', and terrorism was added to the bundle of security threats supposedly presented by or linked to trafficking. Trafficking now appeared as a simultaneous assault on the person and the state. It was increasingly represented in international and domestic US and European policy circles as a vast and ever-growing problem affecting every corner of the earth, part of a dark underbelly of globalisation.

The response to these perceived threats to state sovereignty and national security has been extra-ordinarily violent, sometimes lethal. In addition to efforts to strengthen law enforcement and afford new and greater powers for those charged with safeguarding national security, immigration policies and border

5. J. O'Connell Davidson, 'Trafficking, modern slavery and the human security agenda' (Guest Editorial), *Human Security Journal*, 6 (Spring 2008), 8-15.

controls have been pursued in the US, Australasia and the European Union that have led to many thousands of deaths, and there has been a dramatic expansion of the use of immigration detention in liberal democratic states.[6] But alongside this growing use of force, the claim that 'trafficking is nothing short of modern slavery' has been frequently and vigorously asserted. And if 'trafficking is modern slavery', then any and all measures to combat it can be presented as measures to protect the human rights of its victims. At the same time, the metaphor of slavery works to obviate difficult questions about how the exploitation, unfreedom and suffering of the 'Victim of Trafficking' (VoT) is to be disentangled from that of other groups of migrants, such as 'smuggled persons' and 'asylum seekers', for it takes trafficking outside migration. We are no longer speaking of an ordinary, everyday phenomenon in which modern liberal states have an interest (or multiple, often conflicting interests), but of an 'old evil', as George W. Bush put it in a speech to the United Nations in 2003, an anachronistic 'slave trade' that must be abolished.

NGOs

Another effect of framing the fight against trafficking as a fight against modern slavery and for fundamental human rights is that it has opened the door for new alliances between governmental and non-governmental organisations in the fields of human and child rights. States, especially the US under the Bush administration, were prepared to commit spectacular sums to the battle against 'trafficking – the scourge of modern slavery'. Though much of this money has gone to the countless new governmental programmes and task forces to combat 'trafficking' that have been set up around the world, international agencies and NGOs have also enjoyed a generous share of the pie. Even in the 1990s, before the UN Trafficking Protocol, the opportunities for fund raising afforded by the growing political and public interest in trafficking provided many human and child rights international organisations and NGOs with an incentive to re-badge some or all of their existing activities as 'anti-trafficking' work.

It would be wrong to present the NGOs that campaign against 'trafficking as modern slavery' as an undifferentiated group. Indeed, while some, in effect, function as an arm of government (helping to sort deserving 'VoTs' from the undeserving smuggled or otherwise 'illegal' migrants; or being contracted by government to provide certain services to VoTs, for example), others attempt to hold governments to account for their lip-service approach to the issue and the rights violations associated with their anti-trafficking policies. And in fact, one of the striking things about the diverse body of groups and interests active in the anti-trafficking field is that they do not even all attach the same meaning to the term 'trafficking'. For example,

some consider that *all* female prostitutes can be termed victims of trafficking, whereas others hold that only those who have been tricked or forced into sex work can be described as trafficked. Nonetheless, it is the case that as more and more governmental organisations, NGOs and researchers came to view trafficking as the topical and 'hot' human rights issue, the term experienced what Janie Chuang calls 'exploitation creep'.[7]

Where initially the focus had largely been on prostitution, 'trafficking' now came to embrace a large and disparate collection of global social problems and rights violations. By the 2000s, concerns about child labour, forced labour, domestic servitude, enforced criminal activity, benefit fraud, inter-country adoption and fostering, organ trading, child soldiers, and under-age, servile or forced marriage, as well as prostitution, were all included under the umbrella of 'trafficking' and through this, absorbed into what is described as 'modern slavery'. This process of assimilation was aided by activists in the anti-slavery movement, which had experienced something of a revival as a result of the flood of interest in trafficking. In 2000, the long-established, British-based NGO Anti-Slavery International acquired a new US-based sister organisation, Free the Slaves (the two have since severed their links), and many other anti-slavery NGOs were subsequently founded, especially in the US and other Western countries – including Not For Sale in 2007, End Slavery Now in 2008, Alliance Against Modern Slavery in 2011, Walk Free Foundation in 2012. All have been active in promulgating the discourse of 'trafficking as modern slavery', and promoting the idea that this is a global problem of immense proportions.

The fact that governmental and non-governmental organisations are to be found marching hand in hand against modern slavery will not surprise anyone working in the field of development. Indeed, the burgeoning of development NGOs from the 1970s onwards has stimulated extensive critique and debate. Many commentators have linked the huge expansion of an NGO sector largely funded by Western governments to the neo-liberal development models being imposed by the same governments and their financial institutions, and noted the many ways in which NGOs have been co-opted into agendas set by state actors, as opposed to the poor they supposedly exist to serve. Certainly in the case of trafficking, states, in particular affluent liberal democratic states, have very direct and immediate interests in the direction of the march. And it is this that makes the selectivity of the humanitarianism marshalled by contemporary anti-slavery activists as worrisome as that of their 18th-century forerunners.

Rights

The new brand of anti-slavery activism that has flourished in the wake of the state-led anti-trafficking juggernaut,

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6. B. Anderson, *Us and Them: The Dangerous Politics of Immigration Control* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013).

7. J. Chuang, 'Exploitation Creep and the Unmaking of Human Trafficking Law', American University, *WCL Research Paper* (2013) http://ssrn.com/abstract=2315513

exemplified in organisations like Free the Slaves and Not For Sale, mobilises sentimental sympathy. Like 18th-century abolitionism, it invites us to identify with those who would otherwise be regarded as racially, culturally, socially or sexually distant Others (the bonded brick kiln worker, the temple slave, the restavec, the migrant, the prostitute) on the basis of their suffering, rather than on the basis that all people have equal rights on the basis of humanity. This emphasis on suffering is in line with the approach to trafficking and other kinds of migration described as 'forced' in international law, and most states afford special status in terms of rights and protections to migrants who are deemed to have suffered. But much as the connective tissue between suffering and rights may appear humane, suffering is neither a necessary criterion for membership of a political community nor the usual route to inclusion.

Suffering, David Morris observes, 'is not a raw datum, a natural phenomenon we can identify and measure, but a social status that we extend or withhold'.[8] And because it is not raw datum, that suffering can be selectively recognised. Hence, states acknowledge that people can be *forced* to move as a consequence of suffering purposefully inflicted by private or state actors ('traffickers', actors who persecute on the basis of political or religious belief, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality etc.) or consequent upon war and armed conflict, but not as a result of suffering that stems from impersonal, structural factors, such as poverty. This allows states simultaneously to recognise some kinds of suffering as a qualification for community inclusion, but continue to operate the lethal immigration regimes and border controls that both deny and generate other kinds of suffering.

Historically, demands for the abolition of slavery and demands for universal and equal rights have not always gone together – indeed, questions about racial and gender equality were the source of deep fissures in the 18th- and 19th-century anti-slavery movement. Equally today, demands for action against modern slavery are not necessarily demands that every human, merely by virtue of being a flesh and blood human being, has equal rights wherever she or he may be, and that states are obligated to protect those rights equally, regardless of nationality. This is why everyone, from every point on the political spectrum, can join the march. But it also raises the question of whose interests are actually being served by the apolitical, feel-good, Woodstock-vibe rally against modern slavery.

It is without doubt true that the millions who are dubbed 'modern slaves' by the new abolitionists are people whose lives are variously blighted by poverty, rightlessness, racism, sexism, caste, class, debt, immigration regimes, and other systems that oppress and restrict freedom of choice and movement. But it is far from clear how a concept that lumps together such a wide and divergent range of experience could assist in developing policy responses that address their needs or protect their rights. Indeed, the response of most

'"Slavery is an affront to our humanity" Says Theresa May, Home Secretary', *Sun* newspaper, 9 January 2014. Photo: Lee Thompson.

governments – especially in the affluent world – to the widely cited estimate of 29.8 million slaves globally has been to promise tighter policing, tougher sentencing, harsher immigration policies, and ever-stricter border controls. In other words, in the name of combatting modern slavery, states have pursued policies that imply heavy restrictions, and sometimes extremely violent restraints, on the freedoms of many migrants, and that do almost nothing to change the condition of those unable to move from contexts in which their rights, well-being, and even lives are under threat.

The UK government is a case in point. Theresa May's draft Modern Slavery Bill, which focuses almost exclusively on punitive sanctions against individual 'traffickers', is being introduced alongside a raft of measures designed to make it more difficult for all but the wealthiest migrants from developing countries to enter the UK, regardless of their reasons for seeking entry. Meanwhile, Mrs May's humanitarianism does not extend to the unaccompanied child migrants who, on reaching the age of 18, are snatched from the community in the UK in which their formative years have been lived and returned to countries like Afghanistan where they know nobody and have nothing. It certainly does not extend to migrants deemed 'illegal', who are to be hounded down, detained, and deported, no matter how much suffering this may imply. And even if the Government heeds anti-slavery NGOs' demands for the Bill to be revised to include a comprehensive victim protection system, this state of exceptionalism will remain. Mercy for 'modern slaves' is apparently perfectly compatible with the interests of the privileged and powerful in the contemporary world. No wonder they are loving the new abolitionist march.

8. D. Morris, 'About suffering: Voice, Genre and Moral Community', in A. Kleinman, V. Das and M. Lock (eds), *Social Suffering* (Berkeley CA, University of California Press, 1997).

Interview
Chris Wickham

This is the latest in a series of interviews with Fellows of the British Academy, showing leading humanities and social sciences academics at work.

Chris Wickham is Chichele Professor of Medieval History at the University of Oxford. At the Annual General Meeting on 17 July 2014, it was announced that he had been awarded the 2014 Serena Medal, 'for eminent services towards the furtherance of the study of Italian history'.

What was the initial spark that first made you want to work in and study medieval history?

At the age of nine, I wanted to be a palaeontologist. My parents thought it would be a good idea to show me what palaeontology was really like. So they got the son of a friend of theirs, who was doing geology at University College London, to take me to a quarry and show me Jurassic rocks. This was very exciting. We went to the quarry, he showed me all the different layers of Jurassic rocks, and he explained to me how you could date all the layers by different kinds of ammonite. You could see evolution happening as the ammonites changed. I said, 'That's really very interesting. But where are the dinosaurs?' He said, 'No, you never get any dinosaurs. It's always ammonites. Ammonites are where palaeontology is.'

So then I decided that I would be a historian instead. Slowly medieval history became more interesting, partly because it was obscure. When I got to university, I discovered that *early* medieval history was even more obscure. And when I chose graduate work, *Italian* early medieval history seemed to be even more remarkably obscure, because almost nobody in the country knew anything about it. Of course I discovered that there were plenty of Italians who knew about it, and that being obscure was anyway not the most important thing, but by then I had made my choices.

I was very lucky in choosing Italy, because I liked Italy. It has a very interesting political culture, and in the 1970s the left was moving forward dramatically. It was an exciting time, and I was very keen to immerse myself in that kind of Italian world as much as I could.

What is different about studying history in another country?

It became clear to me that people who study in another country are divided into two groups. One group really want the other country to behave a bit like Britain, and the issues they look at are British issues. The other group want to immerse themselves in the culture of the country they are studying, and to deal with the history of that country in as local a way as they possibly can. I always was – and still am – 100 per cent in the second group.

This is partially phoney. I can't pretend to be an Italian, and no Italian thinks I am Italian. But it allows you to look at both Italy and your own country with a degree of distance that you wouldn't get in any other way. There is, for example, a very strong group of French historians who study Italy: they all have the ability, when they look back on the history of France, to look at it from the outside, as though they are looking at a foreign country. That is a good thing to be able to do, and I'm keen on doing it myself.

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You are interested in history 'from below'.

I have always been interested in history 'from below'. It's where most people live. If between 85 and 95 per cent of the population of medieval Europe are peasants, it doesn't seem reasonable to me to restrict yourself to the study of the other tiny percentage – although of course that is where the historical documentation is. That's true everywhere: even if you look at the society of the village, you will find that you are looking at village elites rather than the poorest villagers.

But you can still look at history from the bottom upwards. In fact, you can't not do so. Even if you are only interested in kings, you still have to look at the way they act in the framework of the society they are operating inside. They can't control everything, and the things they can't control are dependent on the behaviour of everybody else – the 85 or 95 per cent – as much as on their own behaviour. You just have to study the whole thing.

Which piece of work of yours is your personal favourite?

My favourite book is called *Courts and Conflict in Twelfth-Century Tuscany*.[1] It is an attempt to write a history of law and legal procedures in the 12th century through practice, through court case analysis. It looks at what it is that people are really doing when they go to court, how they argue, how they try to convince other people that they are right, and what kind of grounds they're using to try to convince people. I thought this was a good way of getting inside people's mind-sets. And Tuscany of that period had court documents, sometimes very detailed ones, with witness transcriptions in some cases.

I tried to do the book using the 'extended case method', which was developed in the 1950s by Max Gluckman, a British social anthropologist.[2] You follow, as much as you can, the history of the people in that court case beforehand and after, if you have the evidence. It is an attractive way of writing a book because you can tell stories. Stories are attractive things to tell, and they are about really quite small-scale events – 'Who cut down this tree?' It allows the reader to choose whether to focus on the stories or the argument; but you can develop the argument through the stories as well.
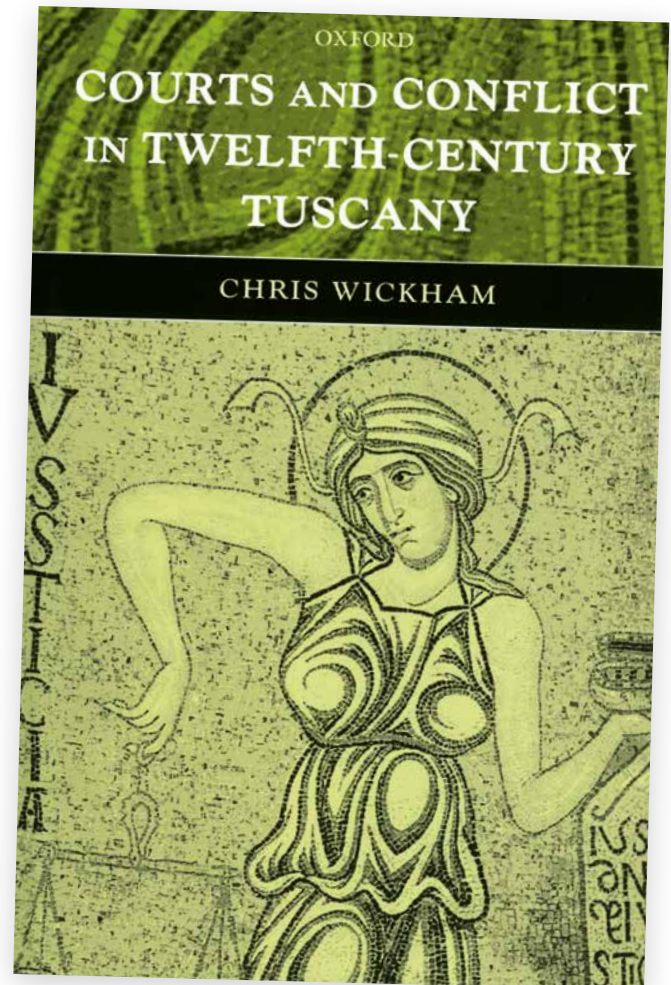
What does the study of these different types of community in early medieval Italy tell us now?

The number of people who really care what happened in the village of Tassignano in the 1160s is pretty limited – and possibly was limited even in the 1160s. However, this kind of study shows that everything is complicated in every period. To get inside such a subject you have to use the same sorts of techniques that anthropologists use, in order to produce – in many cases quite creatively, because you are working with medieval documentary sources – a sense of the way that people operate and deal when they have different sorts of social and political values and constraints. The ability to do that is something that is useful for anybody. It would be possible to do a doctorate on that kind of subject, and then go into modern politics and find that an understanding of the way in which people have to deal within particular sorts of constraints is helpful there too. Knowing how history works in that kind of complicated way is a guide to social action now.

Historians often go on about the strangeness of the middle ages. That is a bit of a trap. But there *is* a sense in which the 980s is a very difficult period to get your head around and everybody's values are all different: you have to engage in complicated imaginative reconstructions. However, it is important to recognise that the same is true for the 1980s: the same kind of imaginative reconstructions are necessary, even when you think you can remember the period. If you work on the assumption that people behaved then much the same as they do today, you are going to get the 1980s wrong. That is something that medieval historians know automatically, and it's a useful guide for everybody else.
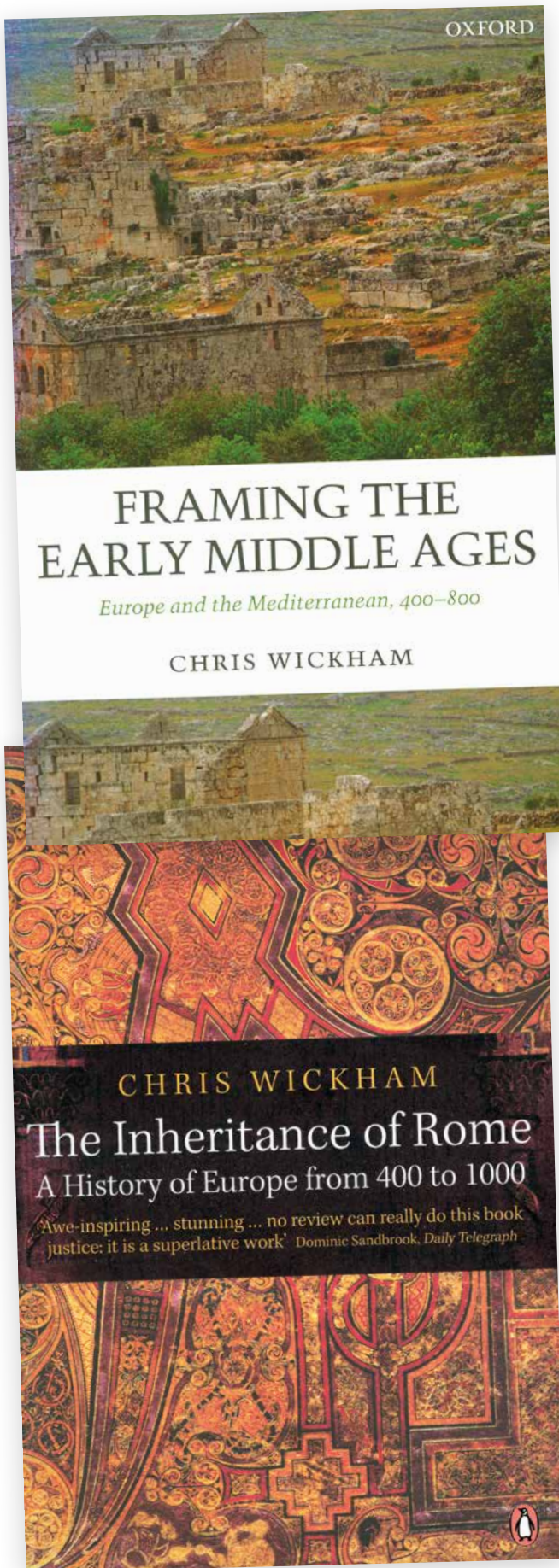
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You're interested not just in writing history, but in writing about the writing of history. In your book *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, you sought to produce 'a set of interpretative paradigms' for the historical study of this period.[3] Why is it important that historians should pay attention to the theory of studying history?

History is the least theoretical of all disciplines, I believe. It is possible for historians to live their entire lives and never read a book of historical methodology (although these days there are lots of compulsory undergraduate courses on it). There is a belief among some historians that they don't really have a methodology: 'It's just me and the sources.'

One of the things that I regard as axiomatic is that we're all operating inside interpretative paradigms – of the type described by Thomas Kuhn in science (e.g. Newtonian physics versus Einsteinian physics).[4] Historians have their own interpretative paradigms. And sometimes you do get paradigm shifts in history, like when Lewis Namier and Bruce McFarlane destroyed

1. Chris Wickham, *Courts and Conflict in Twelfth-Century Tuscany* (2003), originally published in Italian as *Legge, pratiche e conflitti: Tribunali e risoluzione delle dispute nella Toscana del XII secolo* (2000).
2. Max Gluckman was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1968.

3. Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (2005). The preparation of this work was aided by a British Academy Research Readership, held in 1997-99.
4. Thomas Kuhn, author of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) which coined the term 'paradigm shift', was elected a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy in 1990.

OXFORD

FRAMING THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES

Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800

CHRIS WICKHAM

CHRIS WICKHAM

The Inheritance of Rome

A History of Europe from 400 to 1000

'Awe-inspiring ... stunning ... no review can really do this book justice: it is a superlative work' *Dominic Sandbrook, Daily Telegraph*

constitutional history by pointing out that people actually engaged in practical action rather than passing statutes.[5]

However, it is very difficult to have very effective paradigm shifts if people don't know what paradigms they are operating inside. Therefore it seems to me quite important for historians to interrogate what it is they're doing, and figure out what their basic assumptions about the nature of history are. Those assumptions don't necessarily have to be mine. But I've gone on about theory because it's important to introduce a bit of theory to the discipline. Of course, not all historians are naive about this; the cutting edge has never been naive. But particularly in a period like now where nobody really knows where the cutting edge is, it's important at least to get one's own theoretical perspective straight.

You edited for the British Academy a volume of essays entitled *Marxist History Writing for the Twenty-First Century*.[6] What place does Marxism have in the study of history now?

Since it is not terribly morally challenging to say that feudalism is an unfair political system, it is actually possible to acknowledge that 'lords exploit peasants' without regarding yourself as a political radical. So there is a good deal of implicitly Marxist analysis of the middle ages in every historian, of any persuasion.

But one has to recognise that Marxism has gone out of fashion. To an extent, this is because social history and economic history in general went out of fashion. Social history is coming back, so maybe certain sorts of slightly more explicit Marxist presuppositions will come back as well.

The advantage of the Marxist paradigm is that it covers an awful lot of bits of history. It doesn't cover gender; it's not very good on religion. But it covers an awful lot of the rest in an exploratory paradigm, which you can then test. You may test it to destruction, but at least you can test it. It is ambitious, and its ambition is one of its important selling points.

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In the Penguin History of Europe series, you published the volume, *The Inheritance of Rome*.[7] How different is it writing history for a wider readership?

You can't take things for granted. You can't take for granted the fact that your readership is going to be fascinated with knowing whether the aristocracy was richer in one part of what is now France than in the next door province. To put it crudely, it is probably necessary to tell more stories, but I don't think that is a problem in itself.

The challenge is to get people to run along with your account. It could be a political narrative, it could be a

5. Lewis Namier was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1944; Bruce McFarlane was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1964.
6. Chris Wickham (ed.), *Marxist History Writing for the Twenty-First Century* (British Academy Occasional Paper 9; 2007). The volume arose from a conference entitled 'Marxist Historiography: Alive, Dead, or Moribund?', held at the British Academy in November 2004.
7. Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400 to 1000* (2009).

following through a problem. And then you bring them up short and say, 'What is this really all about? Why does this matter? What is the important thing here?' The key to writing for a wider audience is to get people to see what the important thing is in as approachable way as you can.

Are there popular misconceptions about the medieval world that need correcting?

It is certainly possible to show that the medieval world is more complicated. It is possible to show that people were less brutish, less 'superstitious', and less 'medieval' than it is thought they were. I have always intended to do that type of reclamation work. The medieval period isn't interesting because people are really dreadful to each other and will die at the age of 25. The medieval period is interesting because people are thinking and behaving differently, and it is possible to talk through why that is.

There is also a popular interest in the medieval that is in part romantically based – swords and sudden death. One of the things that characterises some people's interest in the medieval period is fantasy games – updatings of the old *Dungeons & Dragons* tradition. The television series *Game of Thrones* is a very good instance of the kind of way in which popular interest of the middle ages can be brought out. My students all watch it: they're all interested to know if I think that it represents or misrepresents the medieval period. It *does* represent the medieval period quite well in some respects: people behaving badly without a lot of technology. There are fewer dragons in the actual middle ages, one has to recognise that. But apart from that, it is certainly no less true to life than the sex romps in *The Tudors* television series, which is also enthusiastically watched by history students. So I am rather a fan of *Game of Thrones* in that it gets people interested in the medieval period. And they can then still stay interested in *Game of Thrones*, while also being open to learning that the medieval period is slightly different.

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What is your next project?

The next big thing I want to do is a study of economic change in the 11th-century Mediterranean. That will allow me to do some of the things that I enjoyed most when I was doing *Framing the Early Middle Ages* – in other words, having an excuse to wander around the Mediterranean for work purposes when it really feels like pleasure.

This project is going to be much more focused on the logic of the economic system that is in operation in the 'long' 11th century (i.e. 950–1150). That's to say, it's not just *Framing 2*. One of the things that has begun to preoccupy me is the fact that nobody really has a very clear idea of what a medieval economic logic might consist of. Looking at a period where there is plenty of evidence for economic change, including important archaeological evidence, is a good basis for looking at the problem carefully and comparatively.

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Why should the study of medieval history be supported by public money?

There are a lot of clichés that people use about history: 'If you don't understand the past, you are condemned to repeat it', and so on. But clichés tend to have traction because they aren't false. Anyone who thinks that they can operate in the modern world without understanding its historical origins is deluded.

The medieval period is simply part of that. It is another form of delusion to think that you only need to start in 1800, or you only need to start in 1500. You have to understand the whole lot.

Take the example of people who study the medieval caliphate. About 15 years ago it might have been thought that studying the medieval caliphate had all the significance of a gardener working on a national azalea collection. However, now it becomes clear that if you actually want to understand what is currently happening in Syria and Iraq, then you have to know what a caliphate is, how it worked, what kind of power it has in certain versions of Islam. Suddenly that form of knowledge becomes relevant.

You can't predict these things in advance. This is a clear illustration of the fact that you can't say 'We have decided that only history after 1800 matters to anybody, and so the medieval period can wander off into some distant oblivion.' Different parts of the present have links with a whole range of different parts of the past. Many of the most powerful modern nationalist myths – the English belief that they have the oldest and firmest nation-state, or the Spanish belief that they are on the front line with Islam – go straight back to the middle ages. The medieval period lies at the origin of modern myth-making. One of our tasks is to simply show the emptiness of some of these myths.
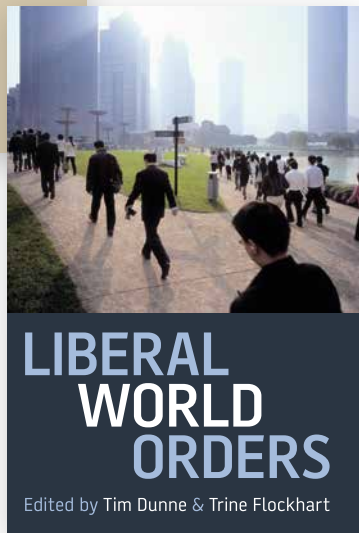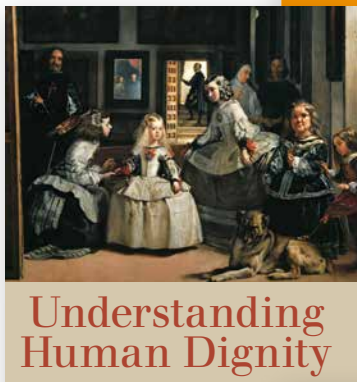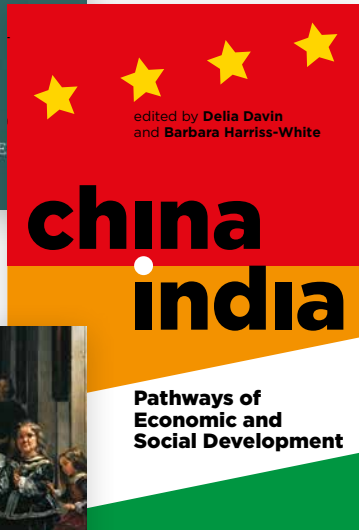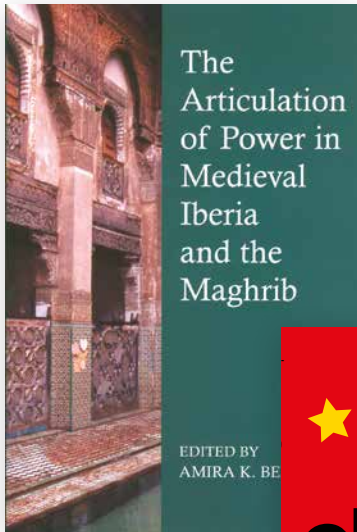
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You were elected to the Fellowship of the British Academy in 1998. And from 2009 until July 2014 you have been the Vice-President responsible for the British Academy's academic publishing programme. What role does the British Academy have in the overall scheme of academic publishing?

The British Academy publishes in several distinct areas, and in each of them it has an important role. It publishes the first books of people who have been British Academy Postdoctoral Fellows – i.e. early career academics – which is an extremely valuable thing to do. It publishes volumes arising from British Academy Research Projects which have been running for a long time – like the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin*, which has just been completed.[8] That whole endeavour took 100 years, but actually the second half of the dictionary was finished in the last 10 years or so, in an impressive run of publishing activity. It is important that someone publishes this sort of thing, and the British Academy is in a good position to do so.

We also publish a lot of collaborative volumes of essays in the *Proceedings of the British Academy* series, which often arise from conferences. What we have insisted on is that

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8. See pages 46-53 of this issue for 'Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources'.

The Articulation
of Power in
Medieval Iberia
and the
Maghrib

EDITED BY
AMIRA K. BE

china
india

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and **Barbara Harriss-White**

**Pathways of
Economic and
Social Development**

Understanding
Human Dignity

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Four of the thematic volumes of essays published in the *Proceedings of the British Academy* series in 2013-14.

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each volume has a really significant, strong introduction which aims to show how the volume can change the field. This insistence has been very good for representing the wide forms of knowledge that fall within the Academy's disciplines, and helps ensure that the volumes constitute significant scholarly interventions. I am proud to have been part of that.

What particular changes have there been in the publishing programme during your five years in office?

Everything has become more electronic: that is the major difference. We now publish an online open-access *Journal of the British Academy.*[9] We have become much more aware of the advantages and necessities of the online world. Many of our volumes are now made available electronically through 'British Academy Scholarship Online', which sits alongside the outputs of other academic publishers within the 'University Press Scholarship Online' service run by Oxford University Press.[10] That is a very good location for us. It allows people to become aware of our publications much more easily, and that has a considerable future.

Your publishing role at the British Academy resulted in your becoming engaged in the whole debate about 'open access' in academic publishing. Why is this issue important?

Once materials are published electronically, people often start to question why they should be paid for at all. Academics always knew they had to go into a library to find scholarly books and journals. However, if those academic publications are made available for you to read on screen, you may wonder why you still have to be a member of a university library in order to get access to them. Of course, the library has paid a subscription to enable that screen access. But the idea that things can be made open for everybody begins to gain ground, and you can see why.

The government in the last three years became very interested in open access and its possibilities. As a result, the various funding bodies for research and for universities began to issue policy statements intended to promote open access to academic publications. The British Academy was one of a number of bodies that started to see some dangers in the proposals.

Publishing is not free. Somebody has to pay for it. And people who believe publishing costs nothing are essentially naive. One of the dangers about believing that publishing can and should be free is that you start to feel that the traditional publishers of scholarly books and journals are in some sense attempting to con the public and should be undermined, by-passed, or abolished in some cases. That doesn't seem to us to be a good result. In fact, jeopardising the existence of academic journals is a terrible result: if research is simply posted online, you don't have anybody acting as a gatekeeper to help tell you if it is good or bad – you would have to read and check it

all yourself, and that would be a lot of unnecessary work. And just believing that everything will turn out alright in a new way of working is fantasy.

So the British Academy has sought to influence the decision-makers by drawing attention to the likely negative consequences of specific proposals. In some cases we have been reasonably successful – although the debates are by no means closed.[11]

In April 2014, you produced a British Academy report on open access. What has been the significance of that?

The British Academy's contribution has not only been to present arguments, but also to collect data – which often enough is not being collected by anybody else – in order to show that the issues being debated are more complicated than people think.

With two research assistants – Dr Rebecca Darley and Dr Daniel Reynolds – I have written a report on open access in the humanities and social sciences, which has focused on journals.[12] It has shown that different disciplines have different relationships with open access: so it is certainly not a case of 'one size fits all'. It has shown that some disciplines have a greater opening into the international world, where open access has taken different forms from what it takes in this country; so it would be a pointless idea to attempt to impose a UK model on the rest of the world (which is where 94% of all publishing happens). But it has also shown that some of the threats to journals are not as great as journal publishers have thought. So it is not by any means a report that aims to undermine current open access debates. There are some respects in which the proposed eco-system for open access, as it is now turning out, is going to be much less negative than some people feared. That is a useful conclusion to bring out.

The exercise threw you into the middle of academic and conventional politics – you even found yourself in front of a Commons select committee. Do you have any observations arising from that experience?

Certainly appearing before the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Select Committee in April 2013 was fun. For a start, Parliament is quite an interesting building. Although the select committee was probably not interested in the same things as most of the people asked to give evidence, it did get a lot of people to attend. So had the House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology, which had met in January 2013. And it got a huge number of people to send in viewpoints. The thousand pages of written evidence that people presented to the select committees form one of the most important and useful guides to what people think about open access that exists anywhere in the

world. From that point of view, it was very useful, even if the politicians have rapidly moved on to other things. Apart from that, I found – as I have found inside universities – that one of the key parts of all political action is figuring out whom you can do a deal with, and how. They weren't inside the Commons select committee, but several people who were there then are indeed people you can deal with.

*

What are the sorts of things that the British Academy should be doing now?

The role that the British Academy has steadily taken up in producing evidence-based but relatively neutral reports about issues of public interest is a very good one indeed. The British Academy has a lot of smart and well-informed people in it. Part of the problem about public debate is that it is often not well-informed. One of the reasons why it's not well-informed is that nobody really knows where to go and get reliable data. And people need to know what the consequences of their actions will be; they don't always have people who are going to tell them. That is something the Academy can usefully do; and the more it continues to do it, the more useful the Academy will be. Apart from just getting on and writing world-changing books and articles, of course.

11. More information on the British Academy's contributions to the debate on open access can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/openaccess
12. Rebecca Darley, Daniel Reynolds and Chris Wickham, *Open access journals in Humanities and Social Science: A British Academy Research Project* (2014). The research behind this report was funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The early charters of Canterbury Cathedral

NICHOLAS BROOKS

In September 2013, the British Academy published in its *Anglo-Saxon Charters* series a two-volume edition of the *Charters of Christ Church Canterbury*, edited by Professor Nicholas Brooks FBA and Dr Susan Kelly. Professor Brooks, pictured here holding the volumes, wrote the following article for the British Academy Review about this major historical resource, before sadly passing away in February 2014.

In the research project established jointly in 1966 by the Royal Historical Society and the British Academy to edit the entire corpus of charters claiming to have been issued before 1066, an important stage has been reached with the publication of the documents from Canterbury Cathedral. The latest two substantial tomes in the *Anglo-Saxon Charters* series are devoted to the second of the four largest archives that will be published,[1] and they bring the coverage of fully edited charters to 820, which is very nearly 50 per cent of the whole corpus (of 1650 documents). Since this publication also marks the end of my period of office as Chairman of the Anglo-Saxon Charters project, it has seemed an appropriate time to reflect on the progress of the whole enterprise.

It is important to recognise that the task of editing these documents has become ever more complex, as successive editions have revealed the variety of their fortunes in different archival situations. There are indeed huge contrasts between different archives, both in the survival of original charters, and in the provision either of brief registers of their extant documentation or of cartularies which sought to copy the full texts of their surviving diplomas, wills, writs and other formal documents.

Christ Church Canterbury archive

The cathedral church of Canterbury is a good example of this individuality. On the one hand, it has preserved far more charters on single sheets of parchment than any other church; but on the other, its cartularies and registers have proved to be much less comprehensive than those of other episcopal churches. The single sheets provide scholars with datable examples both of contemporary scripts from the late 7th century – with examples then found in almost every subsequent decade – and of forgeries from at least the early 9th century.

Geographically the charters concern properties extending over much of south-eastern England, from Oxfordshire in the West to Thanet at the eastern tip of Kent, and from southern Suffolk to the English Channel.[2] They therefore contain precious evidence for the early medieval topography and the language and written dialects of much of southern England. Characteristic spellings, such as the dropping of initial *h*-, or the introduction of a redundant *h*- in words beginning with a vowel, which we might today regard as evidence for 'cockney' or uneducated south-eastern pronunciation, are found to occur very frequently at periods when the charters were being written by clerks in the cathedral community. But when the charters were being produced in a central writing office or chancery, characteristic spellings of classical West Saxon ('standard Old English') were used instead. One gets the impression that the composition of the Canterbury community remained predominantly Kentish despite changing political circumstances there; whereas the royal court was served by a more varied team of chaplains, who developed their own 'national' traditions of spelling (and perhaps also of speech) in the service of kings of different backgrounds.

To give some indication of the fascination of the details to be found within the extant Christ Church charters, it seems most effective to give an impression by illustrating examples from different centuries.

1. The first was *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, ed. S.E. Kelly, published as volumes 7 and 8 in the *Anglo-Saxon Charters* series in 2000 and 2001. The *Charters of Christ Church Canterbury* make up volumes 17 and 18. The two large archives that have yet to be edited and published are those of the cathedrals of Winchester (Old Minster) and Worcester.

2. There are also half a dozen 10th- and 11th-century single-sheet diplomas concerning estates in Devon and Cornwall, which seem to have come into the cathedral archives on different occasions after the Norman Conquest.

A 7th-century charter in favour of the monastery of Reculver

Charter no. 2 in our edition is an original diploma issued in the name of King Hlothhere of Kent, granting one property on Thanet at *Westanae* (that is 'in the west of the island') and subsequently another at Sturry in east Kent to Abbot Berhtwald (*Bercualdo*) and his monastery of Reculver. Both estates are said to have 'very well-known boundaries' which had been 'demonstrated by the king and his agents'; they would therefore seem to have been ancient estates, now being given to a church, rather than properties that had been newly created when they were separated from the existing royal lands. *Westanae* is said to possess fields, pastures, marshes, little woods, streams (*fonnis,* perhaps an error for *fontanis*) and all its fisheries. We are told that the charter has been enacted (*Actum*) in the 'city' of Reculver, in the month of May in the seventh year of a particular 15-year indictional cycle – a year which we can identify as 679 AD. Since the charter was produced at Reculver, its scribe is likely to have been a monk of the community at Reculver, and possibly even Abbot Berhtwald himself. The charter (Figure 1) is indeed written in a fine example of the most formal register of English handwriting: 'uncials' – a script that was normally only used for the grandest copies of the most sacred texts, that is for gospel-books or bibles. In such a way the very appearance of the charter emphasised its sacred and unchallengeable authority. It is likely to have been kept (along with gospel-books and other sacred texts) upon the high altar at Reculver. The early insertion of the charter into a volume of Holy Scripture and its retention there could indeed explain why, almost uniquely among the extant early charters from Christ Church (including those from Reculver), it never received a 12th-century endorsement by one of the Canterbury archivists indicating the name of the properties granted, the language of the document and the name of the intended recipient.

Despite the signs of the high status of its script, we can notice that the wording of the charter is replete with the most basic errors of Latin grammar: with adjectives and nouns repeatedly failing to agree in gender or case, and nouns in the wrong case following particular prepositions. Thus for example we find '… *pro remedium animae meae'* where we should expect '*pro remedio'*; or '*omnibus pertinentia'* where we should expect '*omnibus pertinentibus'*; and '*in ipsa antememorato die'* where we should expect '*antememorata'*. Such schoolboy howlers suggest that in later 7th-century England it was already difficult to train Englishmen to compose or interpret Latin correctly. At that time the texts not only of the Holy Scriptures but also of the liturgy of the church brought to England by the 'Roman' mission would all have been in correct 'classical' Latin. However, this charter, written a decade after Archbishop Theodore and Abbot Hadrian had arrived at Canterbury, shows that educational standards in this coastal Kentish house were very weak. Moreover, since on Theodore's death Abbot Berhtwald was himself to become the archbishop of Canterbury (693–731), this charter may serve as a stark sign of how difficult it was proving to be to maintain
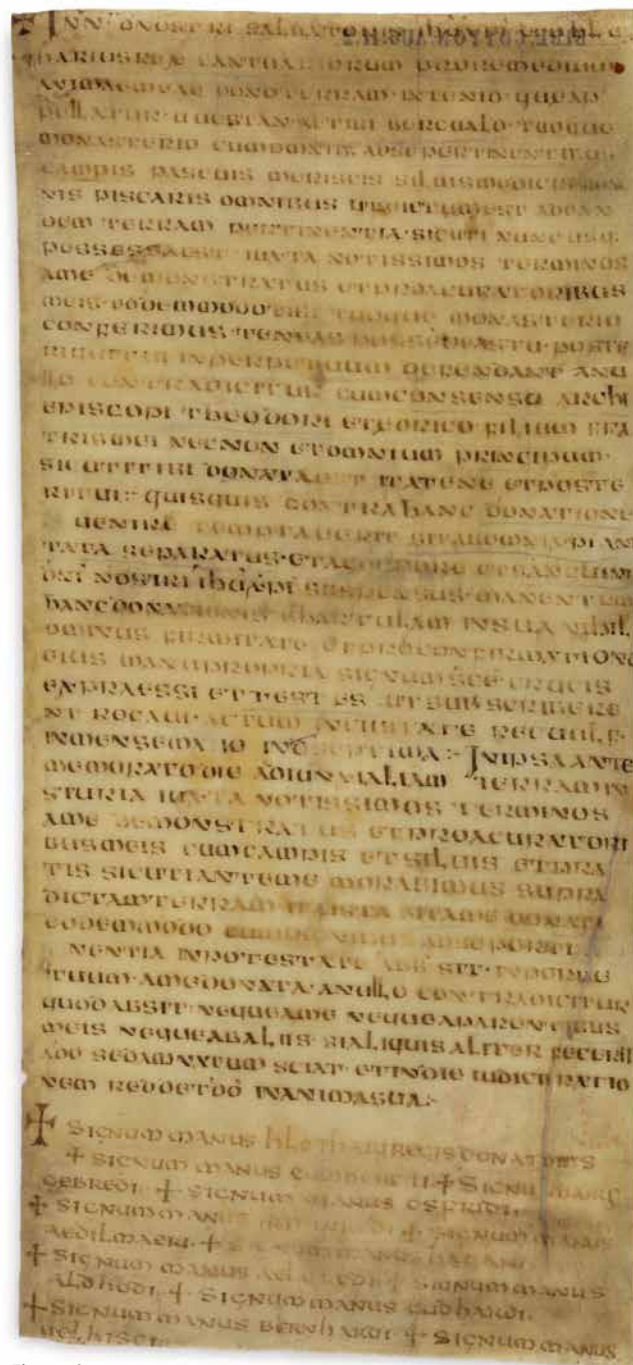

Figure 1
Charter of King Hlothhere of Kent granting Westanae to Abbot Berhtuald, A.D. 679 (BL Cotton Augustus ii. 2; c.330 × 150 mm).

basic educational standards in a land where the native language was not a romance (i.e. Latin-based) language.

A forged charter of the 9th century

Charter no. 12 in our edition purports to record the decision of a synod held at the regular meeting-place of *Clofesho* in the year 742, the 27th year of the reign of Æthelbald, king of the Mercians (716-57). As will be immediately apparent (Figure 2), this charter is written in a much less formal script than Hlothhere's grant of

Westanae. It is in what palaeographers call 'pointed insular minuscule', not in a majuscule (i.e. upper-case) script; and the hand belongs not to the 740s but to the first half of the 9th century (*c.* 825). The hand is indeed very close to that of Archbishop Wulfred (805–32), who wrote two charters that are extant in original manuscripts (charters 53 and 54). They may either have been written by the archbishop himself or by a scribe whom he had trained. According to charter 12, the synod at the request of the Kentish king Æthelberht (II, 725-48) confirmed a decree of King Wihtred (of Kent, 690-725) establishing how the election of the abbesses of the nunneries in the Kentish kingdom was to be done according to the command (*imperium*) and choice (*electioni,* an error for *electionem*) of the archbishop.[3] In reality there is no genuine evidence that the election of such abbesses was lawfully under the control of the archbishop in the early or mid-8th century; but control of such elections was precisely one of the issues in dispute between Archbishop Wulfred and King Coenwulf of Mercia between *c.*809 and 821. There is therefore every reason to regard charter 12 as a forgery of Wulfred's time.

Moreover, the charter goes on to have King Æthelbald declare that, for the safety of his kingdom and at the request of King Æthelberht and Archbishop Cuthberht (740-60), the authority and security of Christ Church on this side of the river Humber (*citra Humbrensis flufio*) was to be denied by no one; and that [the authority and security?] of the female houses (*cenubiarum*) established in Kent were to be freed from services by secular men in greater and lesser matters, as King Wihtred had established for himself and his men; and he (Æthelbald) ordered this to last for keeping and maintaining unbreakably and unchangeably until the end of time. Nothing suggests that there was any need to reinforce Canterbury's authority south of the Humber in the 740s, whereas in Archbishop Wulfred's day the Mercian king (Coenwulf) had recently removed the archbishop from office for several years, and King Offa's raising of Lichfield as a metropolitan see with a Midland province of seven dioceses assigned to it, at Canterbury's expense, was also within living memory. It seems clear that charter 12 is a forgery of the 820s, namely of the very time that the extant manuscript was written.

An 11th-century 'chirograph'

The final document to be considered here is charter no. 169 in the edition. Unlike the documents considered hitherto, it is written entirely in English, indeed very much in the standard form of that language as found in modern Old English grammars and 'readers', that is in West Saxon of the earlier 11th century. As can be seen in Figure 3, this charter was the top half of a 'chirograph', that is a document drawn up in duplicate with the word + C Y R O G R A P H U M + written between the two
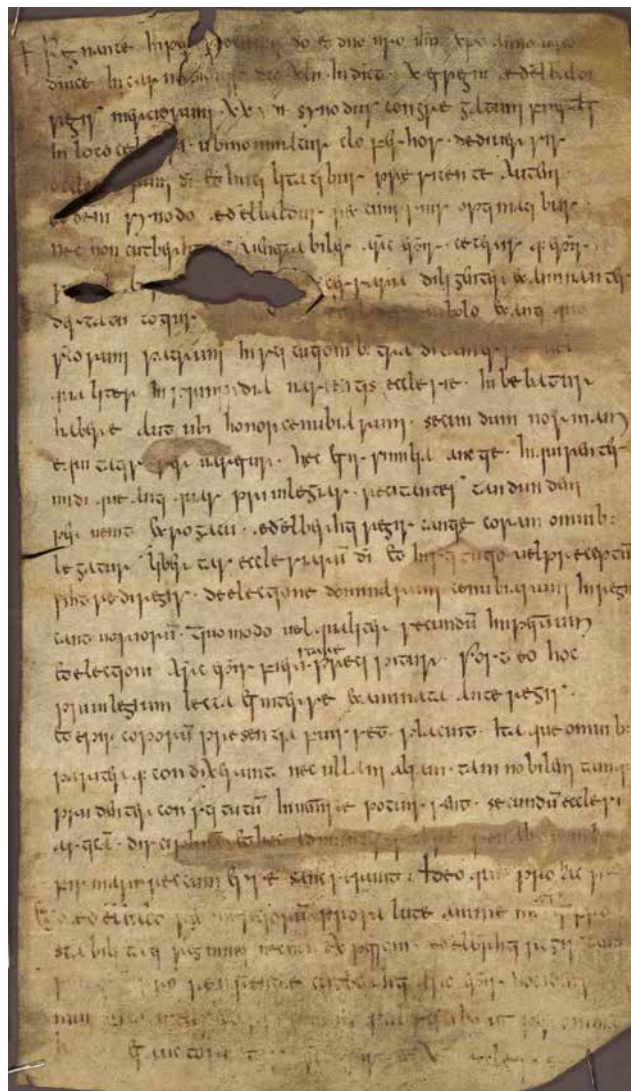

Figure 2
Spurious record of Synod of Clofesho in which King Æthelbald of the Mercians purportedly confirms a decree of King Wihtred granting the archbishop control of the election of the abbesses of religious houses in Kent and establishes the freedom of Christ Church on this side of the River Humber; A.D. 742 (Canterbury D and C, Chart. Ant. M 363; 273 × 160 mm).

copies and then cut through. Chirographs were devised in order to provide each party to a dispute with an identical copy of a settlement, whose authenticity could be established by matching the two halves of the cut word. This document was actually a further refinement, being the top one of three copies. Thus we are told at the end: 'Now there are three of these documents (*gewrite*): one is at Christ Church, the second at St Augustine's and Leofwine the priest has the third.' Christ Church was here acting as the neutral third party (whose copy could be used to authenticate either of the other two, should that be needed); the community of St Augustine's and Leofwine were the two parties to the dispute.[4]

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3. It seems that the drafter of this charter intended the feminine nouns (*dominarum cenubiarum*) to apply to the noble or royal abbesses of 'minsters' with communities of female religious.

4. Later, in 11th- or 12th-century concords, the neutral copy was often the middle copy of three with a cut-word at both top and bottom. In later medieval 'final concords', it was rather the 'foot' or bottom copy that was kept in the (neutral) royal archives and which was to be enrolled in the royal chancery among the 'Feet of Fines'.
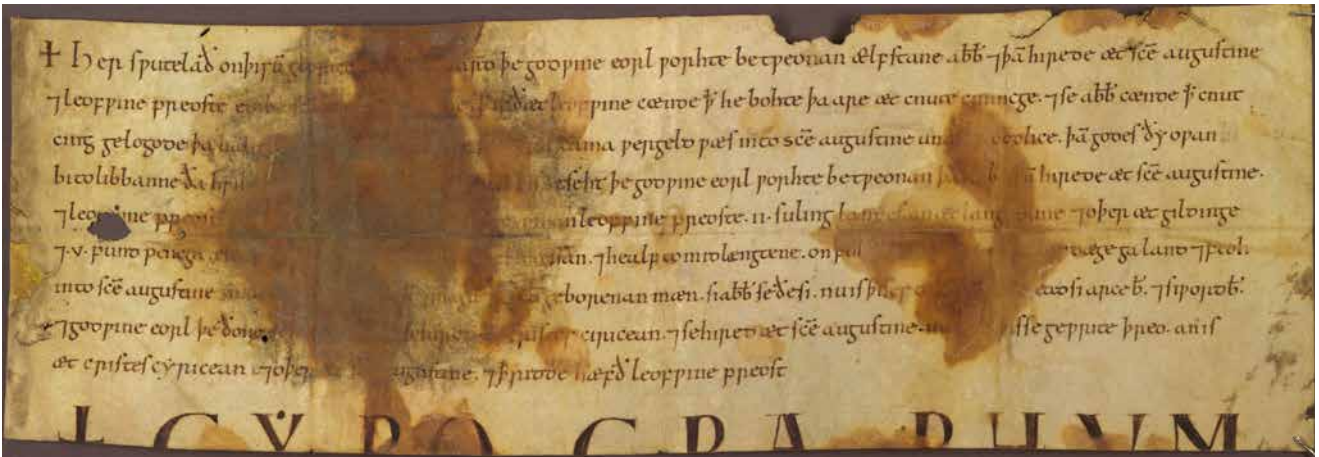
Figure 3
Old English record of a dispute between Abbot Ælfstan of St Augustine's and the priest Leofwine concerning 'St Mildryth's property'; and of its settlement when St Augustine's granted Leofwine property at Landon and Ileden (Kent) and an annual payment of £5 [A.D. 1044 × 5] (Canterbury D and C, Chart. Ant. A 207; c. 100 × 305 mm).

We are indeed fortunate that the cathedral kept this manuscript, for one of the 12th-century archivists who worked through the entire collection of pre-Conquest documents at Christ Church, endorsed this one as '*Inutile*' ('useless'), probably intending it to be binned.

Like other extant chirographs, charter 169 should be understood as the product of legal proceedings. We can deduce this from the fact that it announces at the start that Earl Godwine (who as earl presided over the shire court of Kent in land disputes) had made or 'wrought' the agreement. Moreover, in the penultimate sentence, the first witnesses to be listed are Archbishop Eadsige (1038-50), Bishop Siweard (who acted as Eadsige's assistant when the latter was ill between 1048 and 1050) and Earl Godwine. At least since 1020-3 and the lawcode of King Cnut, it had been customary for the earl and the diocesan bishop to preside jointly over English shire courts in order to oversee secular and ecclesiastical law there; and this document can thus be identified as emanating from a meeting of the shire court of Kent.

The bulk of the text of charter 169 comprises a brief statement of the case of the plaintiff, Leofwine the Priest (that he had bought 'St Mildryth's property' from King Cnut), and then of the defendants, the community of St Augustine's (that Cnut had granted the property to the community in perpetuity). Then the court's settlement is set out in much greater detail. The community was to cede to the priest Leofwine the two sulungs of land in

Kent (at Langdon and at Ileden) for his lifetime, together with a payment of £5 in pence from the estate every year. When Leofwine died, however, the estates and the income were to revert back to St Augustine's and it should be noted that the 'children, women and all the men on the estate' – that is the dependent servile peasants or workers there – were to pass to the community, no matter what abbot might then be in post. Nothing could make more clear that, for the bulk of the rural population, society was very highly stratified and that the late Anglo-Saxon period was by no means a halcyon age of general freedom, as some historians have persisted in supposing.

Further information about the *Anglo-Saxon Charters* series can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/pubs/

The Anglo-Saxon Charters project website can be found at www.kemble.asnc.cam.ac.uk

Small doors on the Viking age: The Anglo-Saxon coins in Norway project

ELINA SCREEN

Dr Elina Screen here discusses her work on the 'Anglo-Saxon Coins in Norway' project – a collaboration between the British Academy's *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* (*SCBI*) research project and the Norwegian partner museums. Her research has led to two illustrated catalogues in the *SCBI* series on *Norwegian Collections* (Part I published in September 2013, Part II to be published in autumn 2014) – further information can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/pubs/

Dr Screen is a Departmental Lecturer in Early Medieval History at the University of Oxford. She is also General Editor of the British Academy's *Medieval European Coinage* research project.

In 1866, Gabriel Olson Sletheid, a Norwegian farmer from Slethei in the region of Rogaland, discovered a hoard of about 340 silver coins from the Viking age under a stone on his farm. Finds of antiquities had long been reported and recorded in 19th-century Norway, and thus the Slethei hoard, as it is known today, also came to the attention of the authorities. Claudius Jacob Schive (Figure 1) – a toll inspector by profession, and enthusiastic student of coins – undertook to catalogue the find, which proved mostly to contain Anglo-Saxon coins of King Æthelred II (978-1016). Schive's work was complicated by the state of the coins, many of which had oxidised in their time in the ground and broken into very small fragments, but in 1869 he was able to publish a list of 179 coins and 113 larger fragments, and the 1,000 or so tiny fragments he could not identify were put neatly to one side for future numismatists to tackle.

I first encountered the Slethei hoard and Claudius Jacob Schive in 2004-5, when I started to catalogue all the Anglo-Saxon and later British coins in Norway up to 1272 for the longstanding British Academy publication series, the *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* ('sylloge' in this context means an illustrated catalogue). I visited museums in Oslo, Trondheim, Bergen and Stavanger to catalogue and photograph all the British and Anglo-Saxon coins in their collections, and research all the individual hoards, finds and donations that had built up each collection. Chronologically, the coins range from

Figure 1
Claudius Jacob Schive. The portrait was painted for the Oslo University Coin Cabinet in the 1920s, and hangs today in the Museum of Cultural History, Oslo.

two Iron-Age Celtic coins to 65 English *Long Cross* coins struck in the period 1247-72. But it is the Anglo-Saxon coins that came to Norway during the Viking age that dominate the catalogue – above all coins of Æthelred II and his Danish successor Cnut the Great (1016-35), which together make up 80 per cent of all the coins in the Norwegian collections up to 1272. Some 4,230 coins and rather more years later than anticipated, the two-volume catalogue of the Norwegian collections is complete, and it is a good moment to take stock. Why is it so important to publish fully illustrated catalogues of coins like this? What do we learn from the coins and this project?

In many ways, the Slethei hoard epitomises the 'Anglo-Saxon coins in Norway' project for me, because it shows how much potential Anglo-Saxon coins have as sources

for understanding Anglo-Saxon England and Norway in the Viking age, and reveals the questions that remain to be answered. It also opens up the history of museums and collecting – and the individuals who played a key part in publishing and preserving the material along the way. Other numismatists had helpfully tackled many of the Slethei fragments in the intervening century or so. But at a personal level, the moment when the well-ordered trays of Slethei coins came to a halt, and instead I was confronted by the daunting challenge of a plastic box containing 400 or so unsorted minute fragments, stands out for me – together with the excitement of discovering another tiny box, containing a unique Anglo-Saxon coin from the hoard, complete with Schive's original ticket describing the coin and identifying it as unparalleled (Figure 2).

Kings and coins in Anglo-Saxon England

Æthelred II 'the Unready' is better known for his failures than his successes as king.[1] His reign certainly saw repeated U-turns, as once-favoured groups of nobles were ousted from court. As England came under intensifying Viking attack from the 990s, Æthelred faced disloyalty among the elite, apparently exacerbated by his poor handling of key figures – including his son, Edmund Ironside. His contemporary nickname, *unræd*, plays on the meaning of the name Æthelred, 'noble counsel': *Æthelræd Unræd* might be translated as 'good advice the ill-advised'. However, Æthelred II's coinage is one of the great success stories of his reign, and a key plank in current arguments for the strength of late Anglo-Saxon England's government compared with its French and German counterparts. At approximately six-year intervals, new coin types were introduced, and the old coins were successfully recalled. Coin users paid for the privilege of converting their old coins into the current type, with the king receiving the fee. English coin hoards, which are typically dominated by coins of the current type, reveal the effectiveness of royal control over coinage and its use.

The unique coin in the Slethei hoard, probably made as Æthelred's final coin type was being introduced in around 1009, gives us a fascinating glimpse into the introduction and design process of a new coin type. It has the standard reverse design of the new *Small Cross* type (the name refers to the style of cross on the reverse), coupled with an exceptional portrait of the king (Figure 2).

Although the portraits on Æthelred's coins look simply drawn to our eyes, the images in fact take inspiration from Roman coin types. For example, the *Small Cross* type normally shows Æthelred wearing a Roman-style diadem, with ties at the back of the head (Figure 3*b*), and the ornamentation of the helmet on Æthelred's *Helmet* coin type from *c.* 1004-9 draws on the spiky crown seen on Roman antoniniani (Figure 3*a*). On the Slethei coin,

1. Two readable biographies of Æthelred II: Ann Williams, *Æthelred the Unready: The Ill-Counselled King* (2003); Ryan Lavelle, *Aethelred II: King of the English 978-1016* (2002).
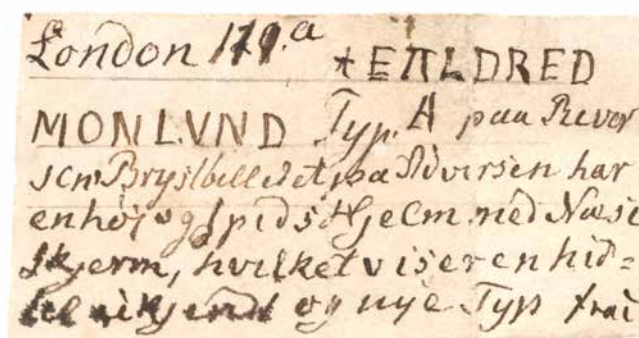

Figure 2
The unique coin of Æthelred II found in the Slethei hoard, portraying the king in a pointed helmet. It is accompanied by C.I. Schive's original coin ticket describing the 'tall pointed helmet' and concluding that this is a 'new type'. (Not to scale: the coin is 18 mm across.)

Figure 3
Two coins of Æthelred II from the Slethei hoard.

a. A coin of Æthelred's *Helmet* type, struck *c.* 1004-9 at Ilchester; theshape and ornamentation of the helmet is inspired by Roman coins.

b. A coin of Æthelred's *Last Small Cross* type, struck *c.* 1009-16 at London. (*SCBI* 65, nos. 927 and 1347. Not to scale: the coins are 18 mm across.)

Figure 4
Agnus Dei penny of Æthelred II, from the Nesbø hoard, Norway. One of only 21 known coins of this type, struck *c*. 1009. (Not to scale: the coin is 19 mm across.)

however, we see Æthelred portrayed wearing a pointed helmet, a much more military look, accurately reflecting the contemporary shape of helmets, rather than following Roman inspiration as usual. With just this sole survivor, we do not know how extensive Æthelred's trial coinage with this much more active, military portrait actually was, and the coin raises important questions about how each coin type was designed and issued. Today we are used to special coin types, such as the Olympic and other commemorative 50 pence coins, which circulate alongside our normal currency. Was this coin, together with another very special coinage from *c*. 1009, the *Agnus Dei* pennies with their religious symbolism (Figure 4), intended to circulate alongside the main coin type, to deliver twin messages of military intent and Christian intercession, in the face of Viking attacks? Or is this simply an experiment or sample, never issued widely, possibly because Æthelred decided he disliked the message sent by the helmet? The Slethei coin shows that, even in the much-studied Anglo-Saxon coinage, fascinating questions remain to be answered about kings and the currency.

The systematic publication of all the surviving Anglo-Saxon coins – the aim of the *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* – not only makes unusual coins like this accessible, but also puts on record all the normal and ordinary coins: all 301 of them in the case of the Slethei hoard, from 36 different mints, ranging in size from the largest mints of London, Winchester and York, down to minor operations such as those at Castle Gotha, Warminster and Watchet. From the perspective of understanding the place of the coinage in Anglo-Saxon society and the economy, these typical coins are enormously valuable. Each moneyer signed his name and mint on the reverse of his coins. All the coins were struck from hand-engraved dies, leading to subtle or not-so-subtle differences in the portrait of the king, the reverse design, and the layout of the lettering on the different dies, even those used by the same moneyer at the same mint. Publishing the pictures of every coin allows the individual dies used by each moneyer at each mint to be identified and counted, and thus gives us an indication of the size of the coinage. The larger our sample of illustrated coins, the better the deductions we can make about the size and availability of the coinage – questions over which much ink has been spilt. Volume by volume, therefore, the *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* is adding to our data and improving the

prospects of offering better answers to these questions over time.

Trade, raid or tribute?

The catalogue of the Norwegian collections is also the starting point for finding out more about Viking-age Norway and its links with Anglo-Saxon England. No single coin can tell us very much about these ties, but cumulatively a large body of material starts to reveal trends and patterns. As part of the process of cataloguing the coins, I produced an updated list of all the Norwegian finds containing Anglo-Saxon coins, drawing on the excellent study of Norway's Viking-age coinages written by Kolbjørn Skaare in 1976.[2] The finds hint at long-standing trading contacts, especially with northeast England, which started before the Viking age: the earliest Anglo-Saxon coin found in Norway was struck in Northumbria (737-58) and found at Ervik, on the coast in Sogn og Fjordane. Given the extent of Viking activity in the British Isles from 793, there are surprisingly few coins from *c*. 800-960, and the few known finds again include a significant Northumbrian contingent, such as a rare *Sword St Peter* penny struck by the Viking rulers of York, *c*. 921-7. Norwegians undoubtedly took a full part in the Viking age as raiders, settlers and traders – but the mysterious lack of coin finds suggests that at this time they spent any Anglo-Saxon coins they acquired abroad, or rapidly melted them down on their return home.

The picture changes significantly around 980, when the successes of raiders in the Second Viking Age are reflected in an influx of Anglo-Saxon coins into Norway. Trade with Germany also flourished (supplemented by occasional raiding), and the number of German coins in the finds rises at this time, too. Tribute-taking also contributed to the haul. For example, Olaf Tryggvason successfully extracted £22,000 from Æthelred in 994 – one of the infamous Danegelds – and used the money to establish himself as king of Norway (995-1000). Unlike Anglo-Saxon England, there was no 'national' coin type dominating the currency in Norway until the reign of Harald Hardrada (1047-66). The Norwegian Viking-age hoards thus reflect the wide mixture of coins in circulation. They typically include Anglo-Saxon and German coins in roughly even proportions, with smaller numbers of other coin types, including Scandinavian imitative coins, Islamic coins, and occasionally coins from elsewhere – for example, from Bohemia, Byzantium, Normandy, and even a solitary Russian coin.

Against this background, the Slethei hoard stands out for its unusual contents, with 301 Anglo-Saxon coins, and just 16 German coins instead of the 100 or more we might expect. The hoard also included 19 imitations of Anglo-Saxon coins produced in Dublin and Scandinavia, and two Danish coins. The latest coin in the hoard was a Danish penny struck in 1018-35, indicating that the hoard was hidden after 1018. All the Anglo-Saxon coins were from Æthelred II's reign, but coins of one type

2. Kolbjørn Skaare, *Coins and Coinage in Viking Age Norway* (Oslo, 1976) remains the best detailed study of the Viking age coins.

dominate the hoard to an unusual extent, with 221 coins of Æthelred's *Last Small Cross* type (made *c.* 1009-16) present (Figure 3*b*). We seem to have here a large group of *Last Small Cross* coins that had arrived from Anglo-Saxon England recently, and not yet become mixed into the general currency of Rogaland. Furthermore, many of the newest Anglo-Saxon coins are struck from the same dies, implying that they had not circulated long in England, either, but come fairly directly from the mint. In turn, this hints that the Slethei hoard may represent the gains of a Norwegian who had participated in the great campaigns of the end of Æthelred's reign.

Contacts continued under Cnut, Æthelred's Danish successor as king of England (1016-35). In addition to many coins of Æthelred, there are large numbers of coins of Cnut in the two largest Norwegian Viking age hoards. The Årstad hoard of *c.* 1,850 coins was found in 1836 (also in the Rogaland region), and included 1,004 Anglo-Saxon coins, 824 of them from Cnut's reign. In 1950, a large hoard that included 174 coins of Cnut out of a total of 964 coins, was found in digging in the post office car park in Trondheim (the Dronningens gate 10 hoard). Alongside participation in Cnut's English army, Cnut's takeover of Norway in 1028 (oiled by substantial bribes to the key men of Norway) may also help account for the high numbers of his coins encountered in the Norwegian finds.

Coins, collectors and museums

Researching the individual finds and museum collections of coins also opened unexpected doors on the history of 19th-century Norway. This was the formative period in which most of Norway's museums were founded (or further developed, in the case of the collections of the Trondheim-based Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters, established in 1760). The enormous interest in Norway's Viking and medieval past, stimulated by Norway's new status as a nation, was an important impetus in these developments. Nineteenth-century Norway was also fortunate in having a succession of eminent scholars who researched and published the hoards discovered in that century, whether academics such as Professor Christian Andreas Holmboe (linguist and keeper of Oslo University's Coin Cabinet), or collectors and scholars such as Schive. While their international counterparts tended to a pragmatic approach, and often melted down unwanted coins to purchase more interesting specimens, it is striking that the Norwegian museums

Figure 5
Fragments from the Årstad hoard, ranging in size from 1 mm to 10 mm across. The Slethei fragments are very similar, though on the whole towards the smaller end of the scale!

hung on to the fragmentary coins from hoards such as Slethei and Årstad, long before this became standard good practice (Figure 5). Though processing so many very small fragments was challenging, their existence was also testimony to the good care the Norwegian coin collections have received over the years.

Producing the catalogue has been a long but stimulating journey, made possible by the many curators who welcomed me into their museums so warmly, introduced me to their collections, and patiently answered queries on everything from coin provenances to travel in Norway.[3] Personally, the process has provided unexpected sidelights on the history of Norwegian museums, given me a whole-hearted appreciation of the endeavours of the many eminent scholars in whose footsteps I trod, and opened up new questions to explore on Viking-age Norway and England. Thanks to the British Academy's support for the project, the catalogue will now open more doors on to the Viking age for others too.

3. The coins in the Norwegian museum collections are gradually being made available on the Norwegian museums' database MUSIT: www.unimus.no/numismatikk/#/L=en (search for SCBI* to bring up all the coins published in *SCBI* volumes 65 and 66, *Norwegian Collections* Parts I and II). More information about the SCBI project can be found on its website: www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/projects/scbi/

Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources

RICHARD ASHDOWNE

December 2013 saw the publication of the final fascicule (part) of the British Academy's *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, an undertaking first proposed in 1913. Its current editor, Richard Ashdowne, reflects on bringing a hundred years of research to a close.

When I joined the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (*DMLBS*) team as an assistant editor in 2008, it soon became clear to me that this was no ordinary research project. On my desk I found a box of slips of paper containing medieval Latin quotations, about 2,500 in number, for words sorted alphabetically starting at Scap- and running through to Scip-. There was also a pencil and a pile of further slips of paper, blank for me to complete. On the shelves around the single crowded room under the eaves of the Clarendon Building in the Bodleian Library in Oxford were many hundreds of books and hundreds more such boxes. I was joining the team of four existing assistant editors who, together with the then editor, David Howlett, one editorial assistant, and the consultant editor, Peter Glare, were hard at work on the final stages of publication of the twelfth fascicule (part) of this little-known work (covering Pos- to Pro-), while also preparing draft entries for words beginning with S. That box of slips replete with their seemingly indecipherable handwriting and cryptic abbreviations was the first of many to pass over my desk in the final five years of the *DMLBS* project, and it gave me a sense of the history and scale of this long-standing enterprise – which had begun with a proposal to the British Academy in 1913 for the preparation of a new dictionary of medieval Latin.

Latin in medieval Britain

To understand the need for such a dictionary, it is necessary first to look back to the middle ages and the complex linguistic situation of Europe at the time. Though not a native language for its users, Latin was nevertheless one of the most important languages of the middle ages across almost the whole of Europe, coexisting with the many local everyday native vernacular languages. Its significance derives from the great geographical and chronological extent of its use, and especially from the breadth and importance of the functions for which it was employed. This was particularly the case in the British Isles, where it coexisted with languages that included English, Welsh, and (after the Norman Conquest) French, from the end of the Roman empire down to the end of the Tudor period and beyond. It was used in Britain, as it was elsewhere, for a wide range of functions, varying over time, with surviving texts from the entire period in fields as diverse as accountancy and zoology, astronomy and liturgy, literature and law.

The linguistic effect of this diversity was felt especially (though not only) in the vocabulary of medieval Latin. The position of medieval Latin as a non-native language and its resulting inherent 'contact' with the other languages of its users, together with the diverse and changing world of culture, trade, and knowledge during the long period of its use across Europe, led its users to expand the available vocabulary in various ways so that they could express the meanings they wanted when the existing Latin vocabulary was (or seemed) insufficient. Thus, new meanings were developed for inherited words, sometimes in replacement for the earlier meaning(s), more often as additional possibilities (such as the specific ecclesiastical sense 'tonsure' for *tonsura* 'haircut'). New words were coined using the usual processes of derivation in the language (e.g. the creation of new verbs from nouns by the addition of conjugation endings to the nouns' stems, such as *ventosare* 'treat by cupping' from late Latin *ventosa* 'cupping-glass'). Finally, the language users' vernacular languages might supply vocabulary that was simply 'borrowed' (i.e. taken over, with any necessary addition of inflectional endings) – e.g. *huswiva* corresponding to English *husewif* ('housewife'). For these reasons, while the few (mainly minor) differences in *grammar* between the classical language and its medieval successor may cause some puzzlement to anyone who comes to a medieval text having learned the language of the Roman era, it is usually in the area of *vocabulary* that the greatest difference exists, and so that is what the modern reader needs the most assistance with.[1]

The dictionary completed: Editor, Richard Ashdowne (right), and two of the final assistant editors, Carolinne White (centre), and Giuseppe Pezzini (left).

The 1913 proposal

By the time that Robert Whitwell, historian, presented his proposal to the British Academy in January 1913 for a new dictionary of medieval Latin, the need for a new guide to the vocabulary of the language had already been felt for many years. This had emerged out of a growing interest in medieval Latin material, coupled with the 'invention' of systematic scholarly lexicography. In Britain, numerous societies had been formed in the 19th century dedicated to local history or to the history of particular fields of human activity (such as liturgy and the law), and many of these had taken to publishing series of editions of original materials related to their interests, including substantial amounts of medieval

material, much of it in Latin. Several series of formal state publications had also been established, including those by the Records Commission and the Rolls Series ('The Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages', published from 1857 under the oversight of the Master of the Rolls, eventually over 250 printed volumes containing almost 100 sets of materials, mainly in Latin, considered fundamental for the study of the history of Britain).

There had been abortive attempts in the late 19th century to produce a new revision of the already much-revised and supplemented *Glossarium ad scriptores mediae et infimae latinitatis*, first compiled in the 17th century by the French antiquarian scholar Charles du Fresne, Sieur du Cange (first published Paris, 1678), which was scholars' main reference work for medieval Latin at the time.[2] However, Whitwell had the idea that medieval Latin could be subjected to the method of the on-going *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), namely the gathering of quotation evidence on slips of paper by volunteers reading texts for the purpose, so that a new dictionary based on 'modern scientific principles' could

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1. The medieval language shows considerable variation in the consistency of the application of the rules of Latin grammar observable in the classical language. For instance, the indicative is often substituted for the subjunctive, sequence of tenses may be less strictly followed, the infinitive may be used to express purpose instead of a final clause introduced by *ut* or *ne*, and indirect statement is frequently expressed using *quod* or *quia* ('that') followed by a finite verb. The medieval language also shows great variation in the spelling of its vocabulary, often corresponding to variation in the way it was pronounced aloud and/or, for new borrowed vocabulary, to the lack of a standard spelling in the donor language. Typical features include the addition or dropping of *h*, the use of *b* for *v* and vice versa, the use of *ae* (or *oe*) for *e* and vice versa, the use of *y* for *i*, the doubling of consonants and the reduction of some double consonant to single consonants. Throughout the period consonantal *i* and *u* are ordinarily written *j* and *v* respectively. Medieval scribes also frequently used abbreviations and contractions.

2. 'Du Cange' was in fact the standard reference work well into the late 20th century. The publisher John Murray in the late 19th century had tried to initiate the preparation of an abridgement of Du Cange, to be edited by E.A. Dayman assisted by J.H. Hessels. This plan was abandoned in 1882. Hessels took up the challenge for a second time in 1897, but again the project was abandoned in the face of the scale of the task.
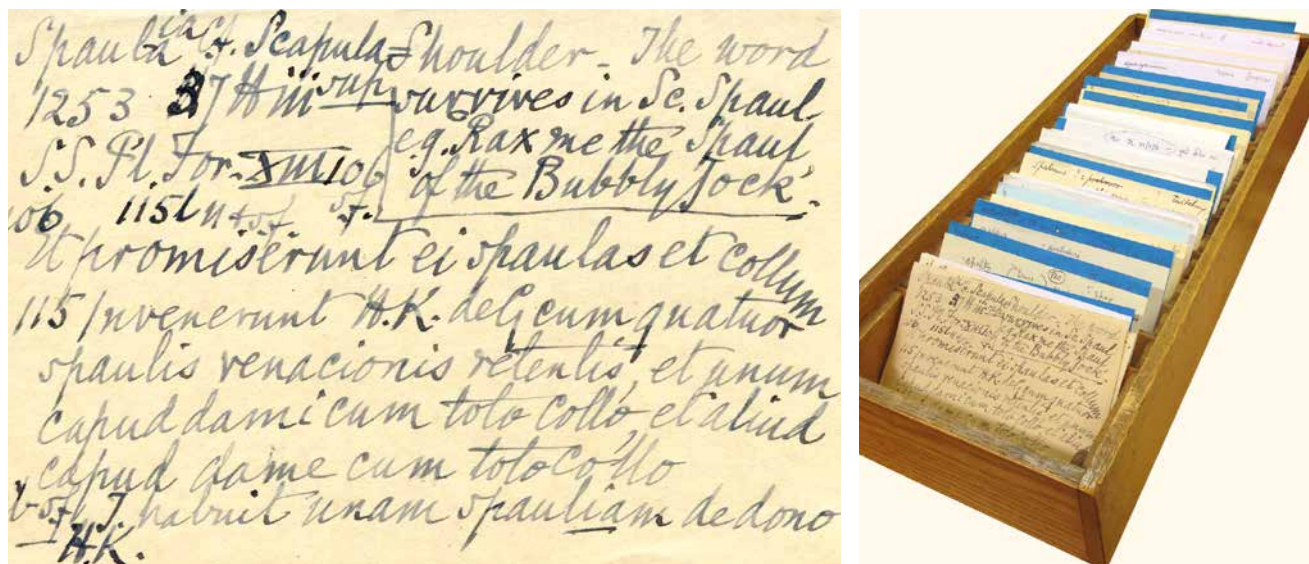
Figure 1
The slip for 'spaula' sent in by Robert W. Cracroft (1857-1932), a barrister who contributed hundreds (probably thousands) of slips from legal sources, especially Selden Society volumes. On the right, the slip is shown awaiting editing in one of the trays used for sorting.

be compiled. (Whitwell had himself been a significant contributor of quotation slips to the *OED*.)

Whitwell's proposal to the Council of the British Academy was received warmly, and he was encouraged to present the idea to the International Congress of Historical Studies to be held in London in April 1913. Reporting the paper he gave at the Congress, he wrote on the following day in a letter to *The Times* (7 April 1913) that 'a rational economy demands that scholars combine to prepare a new dictionary … By the collaboration of workers in all countries, materials should be collected; and this … could and would be done by volunteers, some of whom (and those among the best qualified scholars) have already tendered their services. … I shall be most happy to receive the names of any who are willing to co-operate in the scheme by contributing material or in any other way'. His letter immediately elicited many dozens of replies offering assistance, not only from academics but from the wider learned public, including, for instance, one from a 'master of the Supreme Court Bench'.

The First World War meant that actual progress with the scheme was rather limited for the first few years, and it was in fact not until the early 1920s that the Academy took up the proposal in earnest, establishing two committees to oversee collection of materials for the enterprise. By this time the proposal had also been adopted by the recently founded Union Académique Internationale (UAI, of which the British Academy was a member) as one of its major projects, having as its plan the production of a pan-European dictionary of medieval Latin (the '*Novum glossarium mediae latinitatis*') covering the period of roughly AD 800 to 1200, to which each relevant member academy would contribute material, and the production by member academies of various dictionaries of the medieval Latin from within their respective territories (covering such dates as appropriate in each area). The British Academy's

two committees occupied themselves with collecting material for these two undertakings. They recruited a small army of volunteer readers, establishing further committees in Scotland, Ireland, and the United States to co-ordinate their efforts; these volunteers were to read texts and excerpt quotations in a standard format on slips of paper (6 inches × 3¾ inches), according to a set of rules. Readers were instructed to include the 'word or phrase, written boldy and legibly in the left-hand top corner; the meaning (if certain) in the right hand top corner; the date; the source; and the quotation'. Readers were directed to be selective, making slips only for obviously non-classical words and for classical words used in a non-classical manner: words and usages given in a standard dictionary of classical Latin were normally to be disregarded. The Public Record Office (PRO) in Chancery Lane provided a home for the slips as they were sent in (Figure 1).

The Word-Lists

By the early 1930s the collection of slips had grown to such an extent that it was possible to publish an interim report on progress, the *Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources* (edited by J.H. Baxter and Charles Johnson, and published by the British Academy in 1934). It included only vocabulary new to Latin during the medieval period and it offered only a brief gloss translation along with dates of known examples for each item. The list of texts that had been read by this time filled some four pages. However, though still far from being a dictionary, the *Word-List* clearly filled a need: it was reprinted five times in the following 30 years. From the perspective of the overall project, the preparation of the *Word-List* marked a significant point too. Three observations may be made.

First the *Word-List* at last provided scholars with a new

reference work for British medieval Latin. Though still incomplete in coverage and limited in its content, it was of enormous value to British scholars in virtue of its British focus, its English definitions (compared with Du Cange's Latin glosses), and the fact it was based on a fresh reading of a wide range of texts as far as possible in the best up-to-date editions. It also had the advantage of being compact, appearing as a single easy-to-use volume (compared with the multi-volume Du Cange).

Second, its preparation clarified what further excerpting work could most usefully be undertaken towards the eventual dictionary. In fact the *Word-List* made this explicit to prospective contributors. Items of vocabulary for which the editors considered enough material had already been obtained were marked with an asterisk, while the Preface (p. vi) restated the earlier appeals for volunteer readers: 'The Committee invite scholars to help them make this Word-List a step towards the fuller Dictionary which they are preparing, by contributing dated quotations from British and Irish writers illustrating Latin words not found in this List, or extending the limits of date given for individual words. Quotations which define or explain obscure terms are invaluable. Such notes should be sent to The Secretary, Medieval Latin Dictionary Committee, Public Record Office, Chancery Lane.' Indeed collection of material continued throughout the 1930s and beyond, especially concentrating on gaps in the existing coverage (e.g. in technical fields). Though at all times intentionally selective, the breadth of the survey of British medieval Latin organised by the committee(s) from the 1920s onwards has enabled the resulting dictionary to be confident in its claim that no significant area of material has been overlooked, maximising its usefulness to medieval scholars whatever their field of interest.

Finally, the *Word-List* had a long-term value in preparing the way for the eventual *DMLBS*. The very process of preparing the *Word-List* began to order the collected material and arrange the editorial ground in such a way that greatly facilitated the eventual dictionary project: for instance, attention was directed to how the diverse spellings of any individual word could be handled, the slips being arranged to bring the diverse spellings together and to do so at a point in the alphabet based on a principled decision.

Twenty years after the publication of the *Word-List*, work began on a revision, a process which contributed even more greatly towards clearing the way for the *DMLBS*. This revision was undertaken by Ronald Latham, an assistant keeper at the PRO, assisted still by Charles Johnson until the latter's death in 1961. The result was the British Academy's *Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources* of 1965 (again reprinted many times down to the present day). Its completion confirmed to the then Academy committee that the assembled collection of material was sufficient to justify work beginning on a full-blown dictionary. Latham, now retired as Principal Assistant Keeper of the Public Records, was appointed as full-time editor and began work in 1967 with two assistant editors and one part-time editorial assistant.

Getting the dictionary going

At this point certain important editorial decisions were made, establishing for instance the design and scope of the dictionary. The design was adapted by Oxford University Press from that of the then on-going *Oxford Latin Dictionary* edited by Peter Glare (itself in the mould of the *OED*). The scope was finally established as British medieval Latin from the 6th to the 16th centuries (in practice from Gildas in *c*. AD 540 to the end of the reign of Elizabeth I, a notably longer span than any other dictionary project in the UAI scheme). In particular, the notion of British was clarified to exclude early material from Ireland, which was due to be covered by a project of the Royal Irish Academy (the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources*). Thus the *DMLBS* includes within its ambit all Latin written by Britons, whether writing in Britain or abroad (such as Alcuin and Boniface in the 8th and 9th centuries, or royal or other officials in areas under the control of the English crown on the continent or in Ireland), or by foreigners writing in Britain (such as the 11th-century archbishop of Canterbury, Anselm). In addition, since language is not only produced but also read, the *DMLBS* covers the Latin of letters and other materials sent *to* British Latin authors that have been preserved among the collections of their own letters.

The most significant editorial decision at this point, however, was to bring surviving classical usage within the scope of the project (as contrasted with the earlier Word-Lists' limited, i.e. strictly medieval, remit). This was not only a wise decision in philological principle – regardless of its ancestry such vocabulary *was* of course part of the medieval language, and the greater part at that; it also had practical benefits too. While admittedly hugely expanding the scope of the dictionary (and thus the work of its compilation), it means the reader of a medieval text can turn to a single dictionary for all its usage and does not need to consult separate classical and medieval dictionaries. Moreover, the inherited classical vocabulary provides a framework within which the new medieval can be set, especially in the case of additional or replacement meanings for inherited classical words.

Since 1965 the process of drafting and publication of the dictionary has gone on continuously, with the first batch of entries, A-B (232 pages), published as Fascicule I of the dictionary in 1975. (Latham in fact chose to begin drafting with the 'interesting' words beginning with B and returned to face the challeges of A, including such grammatical words as the prepositions *a, ab* ['by, from'] and *ad* ['to'], once the inevitable teething troubles of the new operation were resolved and the necessary processes and conventions were more settled.)

A new editor

Latham's retirement in 1979 brought David Howlett, formerly an assistant editor on the *Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*, to the helm. He inherited C (which formed Fascicule II) in a well-advanced state of proofs and saw this through the press at the same time as starting to bring his lexicographical and philological

experience to bear on a project that in the 1960s had been estimated (albeit perhaps knowingly unrealistically) at some seven or maybe 10 years to produce a final dictionary of around 1600 pages. David's transformation of the enterprise was profound, retaining the best of the existing procedures and style, but reforming radically across the whole operation.

The range of sources being used and the bibliography were systematically reviewed, a process in which Richard Sharpe was also instrumental after joining the project as an assistant editor in 1981. This was greatly aided by the move of the project to Oxford in 1982, into the Clarendon Building adjacent to the Bodleian Library. The Bodleian Library agreed to allow books not required elsewhere by readers to be ordered to the project office, forming an invaluable in-house reference collection together with the project's existing small holdings; these were supplemented with books borrowed from other Oxford libraries and a complete set of the Rolls Series bought by David himself from the PRO. This in-house resource, combined with ready access to the numerous Oxford libraries' open-shelf collections, enabled the research base of the dictionary to be greatly strengthened by allowing much easier and more extensive checking and finding of quotations and their contexts (often in more recent or better editions that those used by the original slip-takers).

Around the same time came an offer from the University of Cambridge's Literary and Linguistic Computing Centre to create printed concordances showing 'key-word-in-context' for major authors and works (namely Frithegod, Wulfstan, Anselm, William of Malmesbury, Orderic Vitalis, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and the *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* 'Lives of the Irish Saints'), complementing the project's existing concordances for the works of Aldhelm and Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. These, too, were transformative in enabling rapid scanning of large numbers of examples of an item's use to reduce the likelihood that usages might be overlooked. They had a particularly valuable role in offering a ready supply of examples of surviving classical usages that were now needed for the dictionary but largely absent from the slips.

Similarly transformative were David's revisions of the dictionary's conventions and design. Small changes to the design, such as additional leading (interline spacing) in quotation paragraphs and the introduction of an explicit bold sense number '1' for the first sense in entries with more than one sense, made the printed text more legible and user-friendly. Improvements in conventions included better treatment of doubtful readings. Medieval texts and their editions frequently contain phrases, words, or sequences of letters that are certainly or likely to be erroneous: especially in a manuscript tradition, where one manuscript is copied from another, itself a copy of another etc., words often become corrupted by misreading, misunderstanding, or miscopying by medieval scribes and/or modern editors. Sometimes it is fairly clear that there is an error and what the text should correctly say is obvious; sometimes there is merely a suspicion of error or the original author's intended text cannot be surmised.[3] The new convention was that such so-called *falsae lectiones* ('false readings')

could not be given a definition, and the erroneous form would be accompanied in the dictionary where possible with a suggested correction in square brackets and the quotation would then be entered under the entry for the corrected form if the correction were certain (e.g. if a check of an original manuscript revealed a printed form to be the result of an editor's misreading), or under the doubtful form if not. The dictionary now contains hundreds if not thousands of such suggested corrections. In his lecture to mark the completion of the *DMLBS*,[4] David Howlett recalled discussing this particular change in conventions with Richard Sharpe: 'When I said that perhaps no reader would ever notice, Richard fell silent for a few moments, and then said, "Do you know what this means? You and I are writing a dictionary of 6,000,000 words for each other."'

By the time of David Howlett's retirement in September 2011, when I succeeded him as editor, drafting had advanced to the end of S (roughly 90% of the total), with entries in T and beyond in preparation, and publication of Fascicule XIV (covering Reg- to Sal-, pages 2729–2920) was imminent. The final two years has seen the completion of drafting and the publication of the final three fascicules (XV, Sal- to Sol-; XVI, Sol- to Syr-; and XVII, Syr- to Z; pages 2921–3750).

Continuity and change

Like David Howlett before me, I too came to the *DMLBS* with some relevant past experience in dictionary making, in my case with experience of the technical details of electronic working in the lexicographical world. It was immediately clear to me that the project could benefit hugely from the kind of technology being widely used for other dictionaries, not only in terms of rate of progress but also the accuracy that could be achieved. Thus first as an assistant editor and latterly as editor, I have followed in his footsteps matching continuity of the underlying lexicography with changes that have enabled the project to reach the end of the alphabet and to do so at an unprecedented rate while preserving and enhancing the quality of the text.

Latham and later Howlett both prepared the early part of the dictionary on foolscap paper, copying out the selected quotations and adding interspersed definitions, into a handwritten draft that was subsequently typed, corrected and sent for typesetting by hand. Even when I joined the team in 2008, quotations were edited by hand on the slips with any additional quotations being written onto new slips, and then sorted into their ordered groups; definitions were prepared in manuscript on yet more slips (Figure 2), which were interleaved

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3. Error and 'correction' typically go hand in hand, in that there must be a plausible account of how the erroneous surviving form could have arisen out of what the original author is being supposed to have written: given the variability of medieval Latin spelling and the sometimes inconsistent grammar, the mere presence of text that looks odd is not of itself evidence that the transmitted text is anything other than what the original author may be supposed to have written.
4. Completion of the dictionary was celebrated on 12 December 2013 at the Bodleian Library with a lecture by David Howlett on 'Making the Dictionary' and a reception.
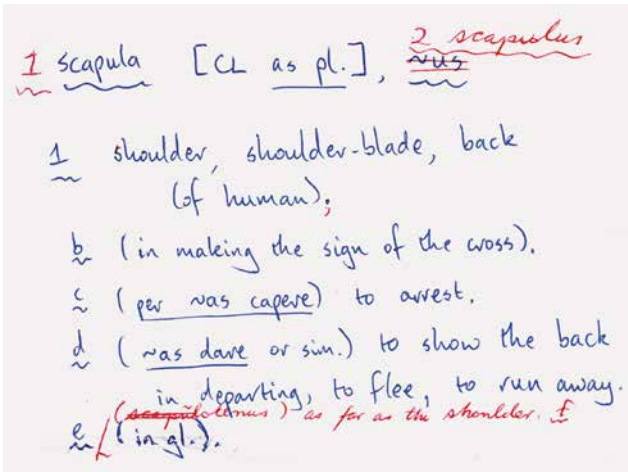
Figure 2
A definition slip from October 2008 showing draft editorial text for 'scapula' (headwords, etymology, definitions for sense 1 and its subsenses), and the editor's first set of revisions.

in the relevant places; slips not used for an entry were bundled together at the back of the entry, and the whole sequence was replaced in the box ready for revision and, subsequently, typing, checking and typesetting. In the last few years, however, the final fascicules were prepared entirely electronically, with assistant editors drafting their entries directly on screen, the editor revising the entries in that electronic form, and typesetting done from the prepared data (Figure 3).

This is not the place to go through in detail the finer technical points of my development of the new XML electronic editorial architecture and its use, but a brief summary of the four main phases is worthy of record.[5] The first phase of the transition was to focus on ensuring the necessary continuity, i.e. to establish the underlying structure for the new way of working, by identifying the different parts of entries, how they relate to each other, and how they are displayed, and then modelling this in the electronic system. The second phase was to introduce the new system for the input of material that had already been drafted but not yet typed up for publication, of which a considerable backlog existed: here the system showed its first significant efficiency by making typing up an easier task, less susceptible to error (thus increasing speed and reducing the burden of proofreading and correction); it also made it possible for additional staff to be appointed to carry out this task, which the previous data entry method had made effectively impractical. The third phase extended the system to assistant editors

for drafting entries (and to the editor for checking and revising the draft). Again efficiencies and improvements in accuracy were immediately clear: to give just a couple of examples, the former process of finding new quotations in online databases and copying them by hand onto slips ready to be typed into the draft dictionary text, had been laborious, inefficient, and liable to introduce errors of transmission which the new system, by allowing careful use of 'copy and paste' functionality, effectively eliminated; time-consuming tasks such as cross-referencing and alphabetisation were taken on by the software allowing editors to concentrate on editorial matters.[6] As a final phase, the project was able to have the previously published dictionary text captured as XML data, enabling editors to search and use the printed text more rapidly than ever before.

The challenges of changing the project's basic working tools while retaining the core lexicographical process and not interrupting or even slowing the on-going work of drafting and publication were significant for the team as a whole but the end result now shows they were worthwhile to meet. The *DMLBS* stands complete sooner than many had expected and in better shape to face the future, with well-developed plans for its online publication as a searchable database using the full data-set that has therefore been compiled.

Final reflections

The publication of the final fascicule has prompted us to a good deal of looking back over the project's century-long history, and of course each of the team will take different memories from their association with the project. Many of the aspects of everyday working life will stay with us for years to come, including for instance the series of editions of a type-written set of miscellaneous guidance notes under the waggish title 'MLD Hints: being a collection of *Wrinkles*, or Matters useful to be known, alphabetically dispos'd, for Editors of the *Mediaeval Latin Dictionary* …' which once circulated among the team to assist with some of the idiosyncratic intricacies of the operation.[7] What stand out for me, however, are the occasional moments of vivid connection with those who went before us.

5. The data structure of choice for lexicography for around two decades now has been 'extensible mark-up language' (XML), in which a continuous string of text (such as a dictionary) is subdivided into sections (e.g. entries) that may be further subdivided and so on, each nested subdivision being marked by descriptive tags. XML encoding offers several important features, of which I would highlight two here. First, data and its structure are independent of presentation: any identifiable part of a text marked up in XML (e.g. a date or author name) can be presented using any formatting available to the system (e.g. bold, small capitals). Second, any such part can be presented in any order through a process of transformation, which takes XML as its input and produces an output based on selecting parts and processing them as required (e.g. by alphabetical sorting, counting, changing upper to lower case).

6. Alphabetization of entries can be done rapidly and without error by a machine, while a human editor can struggle to sort correctly when having to take account of the fifth or even the ninth or tenth letter of a word (e.g. *tetragonalis, tetragonalitas, tetragonaliter, tetragonicus, tetragonus, tetragrammaton, tetragrammatus*).

7. For instance, in references the dictionary generally puts 'f.' in front of folio numbers, but not for the Domesday books nor for Rastell's *Entries* nor the medical texts by John of Gaddesden and Gilbertus Anglicus. With many thousands of works on the bibliography and many more such intricacies, the need for help just with referencing is considerable. The situation is yet more puzzling when one contemplates the fact that what a slip identifies as *De invent. sanct. cruc.* is in our (loosely alphabetically arranged) published bibliography as *Found. Waltham*: this is the foundation of Waltham Abbey, i.e. *De inventione sanctae crucis* ed. W. Stubbs (1861), from which our slips were taken, now cited from *The Waltham Chronicle* ed. L. Watkiss and M. Chibnall (1994). A considerable number of the texts in our reference collection have the addition of multiple alternative numerations in pencil in their margins and/or complex home-made concordances between editions to facilitate these conversions.

zythum [CL < ζῦθος], sort of drink made from fermented malt, (Egyptian) beer.

hunc liquorem .. nominant .. alii '~um', ut Aegyptii .. alii 'cervisiam', ut Galli Caius *De ephemera Britannica* (Louvain, 1556) f. 153; ~um renes et nervos tentat, cerebri membranas officit, inflationem parit, vitiosum succum creat, et elephantiasin .. gignit [Diosc. II 87] *Ib.* (Louvain, 1556) f. 154.

zyzanium v. zizanium.

Figure 3
Right: A screenshot of the XML entry for 'zythum', the very last one in the dictionary.
Above: the entry as printed in the dictionary.
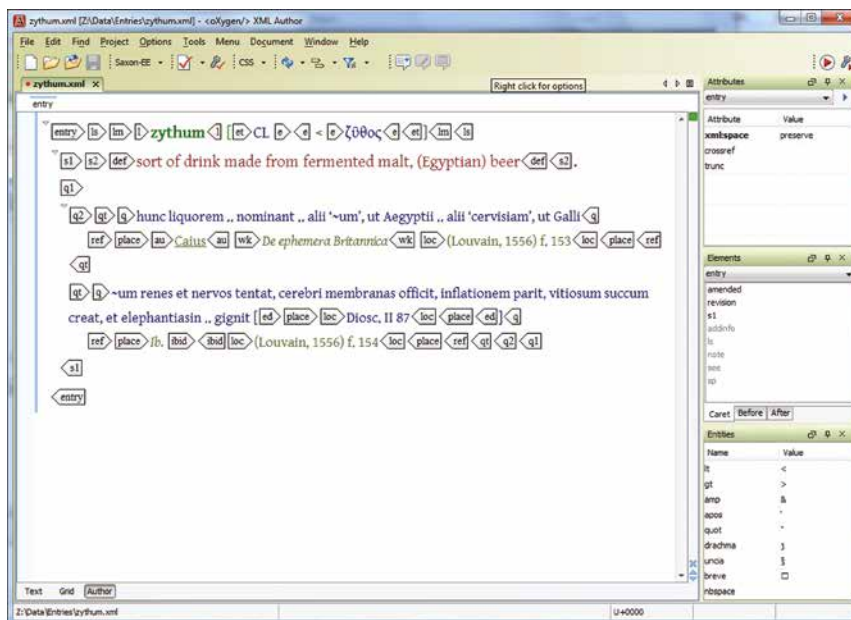
The project would not have been what is has been without the early volunteer readers, who are made real to the team today through the slips bearing their writing. They include, for instance, B.W. Swithinbank, a District Commissioner in the Burmese Division of the Indian Civil Service, said by project folklore to have excerpted some of his tens of thousands of quotations onto slips sat atop an elephant while making his travels through Burma, occasionally sending telegraph requests to send more books (Figure 4). But even just a single slip itself can give an idea of its writer: on the reverse of one slip (from another excerptor) containing a quotation for *securus* we find:

The late Arthur James, the well known Eton master, once drew some most amusing sketches illustrating — safety.

Securus. The Indian taking lunch with the tiger about to pounce on him, i.e. careless, without security.

Incolumis. The Indian safely up a tree, after escaping the tiger's bound: safe after danger.

Tutus. The Indian behind the city wall defying the animal's efforts: safe & securely found.

The med. sense of security is purely financial here.

Others who have made their presence felt include Col. John Summers Drew (1879–1949), a First World War hero who went on to become a leading amateur historian of Hampshire, and Canon John Lionel Fisher, an expert on the history of the county of Essex, who both made a huge contribution of material relating to agriculture.

Some of the sources themselves stand out for bringing the medieval world to life. There is William Merle's note of the earthquake of 28 March 1343 in his weather diary (so powerful that stones were dislodged from chimneys). We have used a 14th-century diagram of a body with captions and pointers indicating sites for effective bloodletting. We quote the record of expenditure in 1252 pursuant to an instruction to the keeper of the 'white (i.e. polar) bear' at the Tower of London, recently sent to the king from Norway: he was to have a muzzle made together with 'a long and strong rope to hold the bear while it fished in the Thames'. With more than 400,000 printed quotations across 58,000 entries on 3,750 pages, there is hardly a page of the *DMLBS* that does not offer something unexpectedly revealing about life in medieval Britain.

Long-running projects with such a particular unchanged focus are rare, especially ones with a full century of history, and so it is rare for a project such as the *DMLBS* to come to an end, but for two reasons it seems to me a healthy thing that it does. First, the end is the result of completing the task that the project set out on, fulfilling the needs of dictionary users. They deserve not just an accurate dictionary but a *finished* dictionary, and so while numerous linguistic or practical problems may be encountered along the way they must be (and have been) dealt with in such a manner as to allow the overall process to conclude nonetheless.[8] Second, a project of the nature of the *DMLBS* would hardly be proposed today: to me it does not seem to be reducible to an enterprise that could be completed within the period of a single research grant period, however large a team

8. As Anthony Harvey, editor of the Irish *DMLCS* once observed, 'library shelves [are] replete with fascicles of definitive dictionaries of various languages that were complete for the first few letters and then petered out, either abandoned ignominiously or else still in progress after decades; scholars were as likely to wish to look up a word beginning with S or T as they were one commencing with A or B'. It would be unfair to compare the *DMLBS*'s progress directly with that of the other projects around Europe under the UAI Medieval Latin Dictionary initiative, which have all had to work in very different circumstances from each other and with reference to different medieval linguistic situations. For reference, however, I would record that by the date of the completion of the *DMLBS* in December 2013, the Finnish, Swedish and Dutch dictionaries had been completed, and, for instance, the Polish dictionary was published to a point in S, the Czech in M, and the German *Mittellateinisches Wörterbuch* in H, all having begun at A; the supranational *Novum glossarium* appeared stalled, having begun at L and reached the middle of P.

that might be assembled, and it would be foolhardy, even reckless, to begin without assurance of the resources needed to see the enterprise through. Still, the completion of the *DMLBS* shows that projects of this kind can be brought to a successful conclusion with proper attention to marrying academic research and effective organisation and planning, and that therefore the scale of such projects should not of itself stand in the way of their being proposed, established, and subsequently completed according to plan. Moreover, the need for fundamental tools for scholarship, such as dictionaries, does not diminish, though their role continues to go largely uncredited: people are little more likely to cite the dictionaries that they rely on so absolutely in reading their sources than to cite the word-processing software they then use to write up their research.

My final words are of salute for those who have made the dictionary over the years: our first editor, Ronald Latham, his successor David Howlett, who devoted his career to the enterprise and so nearly saw it through to completion before his retirement, the fifteen assistant editors over the years, and our remarkable consultant editor Peter Glare. I salute too the volunteer readers and the successive British Academy committees, most recently chaired by Professor Michael Winterbottom, Professor J.N. Adams, and Professor Tobias Reinhardt, whose role throughout has been critical to the project's success. As the project now winds down, I can only reflect on the fact it has been a privilege for me to face the challenges of bringing to an end something to which so many great people have devoted so much of their time and energy over such a long period, for the *DMLBS* is not merely at an end but now complete. It stands ready for the next phase of its existence, in use by all who can benefit from what it has to offer.
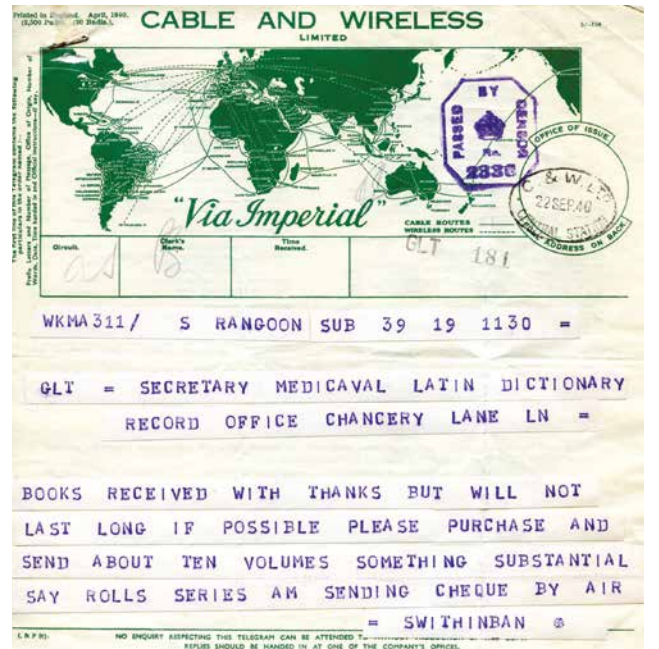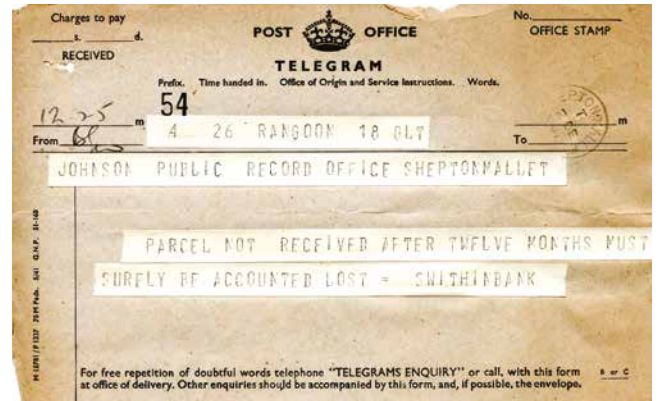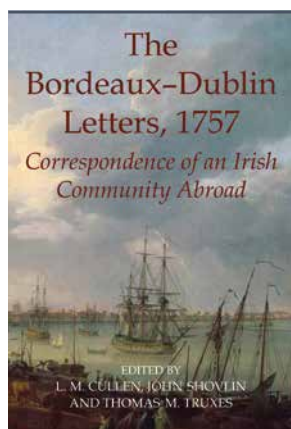
Figure 4
Telegrams sent from Rangoon by volunteer reader B.W. Swithinbank, asking to be sent more books to work on.

The Bordeaux–Dublin letters project
Documentary editing, public history, and scholarly exchange

THOMAS M. TRUXES

In September 2013, the British Academy published an edition of *The Bordeaux–Dublin Letters, 1757: Correspondence of an Irish Community Abroad*. Here one of the volume editors describes this remarkable cache of documents and the project that has brought them to life.

Buried deep in the massive collection that comprises the prize court papers of the High Court of Admiralty at the National Archives is an innocuous bundle labelled 'Two Sisters – John Dennis'. Its contents relate to an Irish wine ship returning home from Bordeaux during the early phase of the Seven Years' War, the great mid-18th-century struggle between Great Britain and France.

The documents taken off the *Two Sisters* of Dublin following its capture by a British privateer include a packet of 125 letters (100 of them in English and 25 in French). Most were written by members of the Irish community in the Bordeaux region to family, friends, and business associates in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, and other places in Ireland. Eighty-five of the letters were still unopened at the time of their discovery in January 2011 (Figure 1). Nearly all date from the early weeks of 1757, a time of high anxiety in a community cut off from its homeland by war.

The Bordeaux–Dublin letters provide an extraordinary entrée into a long-vanished world. Correspondents range from wealthy merchants in the Irish wine trade, to young Irishmen being educated in France, to Irish prisoners of war incarcerated in the notorious Bayonne Castle. There are sailors, servants, prisoners of war, priests, and clerks – among others. Particularly striking is the strong presence of women, and the voices of ordinary people living lives that will feel familiar to readers centuries later.

Figure 1
The 'Two Sisters' of Dublin was captured by a British privateer in 1757 as she returned from Bordeaux with a cargo of wine, spirits and other goods. Impounded with all her contents was a packet of 125 letters. These never reached their intended recipients and lay forgotten in the National Archives until they were discovered in 2011.

Wine trade

Many of the letters have something to do with Irish involvement in the production and marketing of French wine and brandy. Over the course of the 18th century, Bordeaux's vigorous wine and brandy trade produced a transformation in the city's hinterland and a massive expansion in the acreage planted in vineyards. It also encouraged foreign investment and the formation of colonies of foreign merchants in the city. Most were German and Irish, and situated in the heart of Bordeaux's commercial district. Both Catholic and Protestant interests were well represented among the Irish firms.

War – and an occasional bad vintage – were severely disruptive to trade. James Babe's letter to a Dublin importer is filled with frustrations relating to outstanding debts, the scarcity of shipping space aboard vessels bound for Ireland, and the dangers of wartime shipping. He also discusses strategies to mitigate commercial risk, such as trading through neutral ports, particularly St Sebastian in Spain and Rotterdam in the Netherlands, and monitoring the movements of British privateers through contacts in ports along the French Atlantic coast.

Another Irish wine merchant, Jacques Horish, bemoans not being able to ship the wines in his cellar to Ireland. 'I tasted them lately', Horish told his correspondent in Dublin, '& find them well flavoured, a good Colour & a tollerable body for the year'. To add to his difficulties, the Bordeaux vintages of 1756 had been severely affected by bad harvests. Horish described it as 'the most wretched & worst [wine] fore upwards 20 years past' (Figure 2).

Prisoners of war

There is frequent reference in the letters to prisoners of war. During the Seven Years' War, only a few of the POWs confined in the southwest of France were free on parole. Most were incarcerated in the notorious Bayonne Castle, not far from Bordeaux. Those who gained their release – other than by
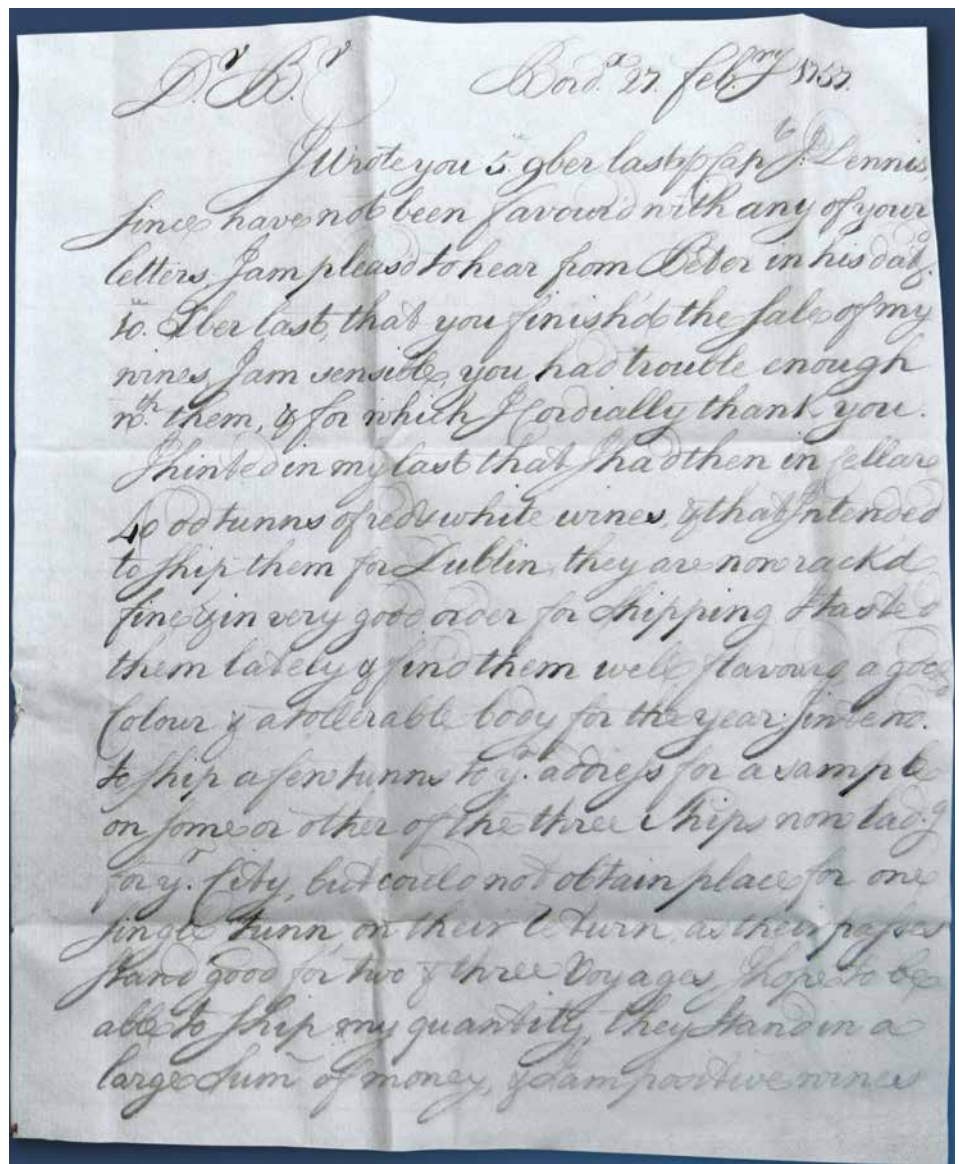

Figure 2
Letter from Jacques Horish, Irish wine merchant, to Mr Richard Curtis of Dublin, describing the '4000 tunns of red & white wines' that he intended to ship to Dublin.

Figure 3
Letter from prisoner-of-war William Fleming to his sweetheart in Dublin: 'Dear Constant Maid …'

My case hear is not So bad as you Immajane. I Save'd my chest & all my cloaths that I had with me, Books & papers, & was treated like a Gentliman in this castle which is verry larg. We have Beds & Rooms that we hiar (a part from the Common prisoners), has fiars & Candle light. Eight commanders in a Roome lives merry, as prisoners generally doe, has two larg Squair's to Walk in, & a Billiard table to play at.

Students

By the 1750s there was a significant Irish presence in educational institutions in Spain and Portugal, France, the Austrian Netherlands, and even central Europe. Deprived of the opportunity to educate their sons at home, Irish Catholic families with the means to do so sent them to the Continent, where they entered colleges and seminaries with close ties to Ireland. As evidenced by the Bordeaux–Dublin letters, southwestern France was an attractive destination for those seeking an education abroad.

J. MacGuire was a student at the Jesuit College in Agen, a town not far from Bordeaux. He supported himself by tutoring the children in a gentleman's home near the college (earning free room and board plus an allowance of ten livres per month). In 1757 he was in the final year of his studies and in December would enter the Irish seminary in Bordeaux. In a letter to his uncle, Maurice FitzGerald in Ballyhooly near Cork, MacGuire offers advice for a cousin aspiring to enter the Irish college: 'He is to learn the best prose authors', if he is to succeed, 'and exercise his memory in getting them by heart'.

In a letter ostensibly about his lacklustre academic performance, Francis Silvester Bird, a younger Irish student in Bordeaux, digresses into asking his father for new clothes which he cannot afford on his allowance from home. Most of the student letters in this collection are in a similar vein. One is reminded of present-day college students – sometimes homesick, often disenchanted with their work, and perennially broke.

escape – did so through personal intervention or one-to-one prisoner exchanges. If they had no sponsors to arrange their release, prisoners could be separated from their families until the war's end.

In one particularly bitter letter, Richard Exham of Cork rages about the poor living conditions and the duplicity of the French, as well as the fact that he was not promptly provided with paper and ink with which to write home. He is angry at himself for not having escaped when he had a chance: 'All Communication is shut up; we are under the Strictes confinement and have not the Liberty of seeing any person without a guard of Soldiers Round us'.

In contrast, from a room in the Bayonne Castle not far from Richard Exham's, another prisoner, William Nassau Fleming, writes to his sweetheart in Dublin (Figure 3):

Parents and children

Some of the most fascinating correspondence in the Bordeaux–Dublin letters is between parents and their children, and by parents about their children. In several, young people study-ing or working in France write to their families in Ireland with details about their lives or their need for money. A common refrain is concern for the welfare of family members back in Ireland.

Several letters celebrate the birth of children. In one spirited letter, John Thomson, the chief clerk at one of the leading Irish wine houses in Bordeaux, ex-presses his pride as a new parent – in this instance that of a baby girl – as he welcomes the newest add-ition to the family of his employers, the Bartons, a wealthy Irish family racked by intergenerational disputes (Figure 4).

The thoughtful letter of an Irish ship captain, Walter Codd – free on parole as a prisoner of war in Marseille along with his son – to his wife Catherine, at home with their two daughters in Dublin, is a reflection on raising teenagers. 'Children Run not in direct lines', he tells his wife, 'But have a rethrograde motion'. He strives 'to look on my Child
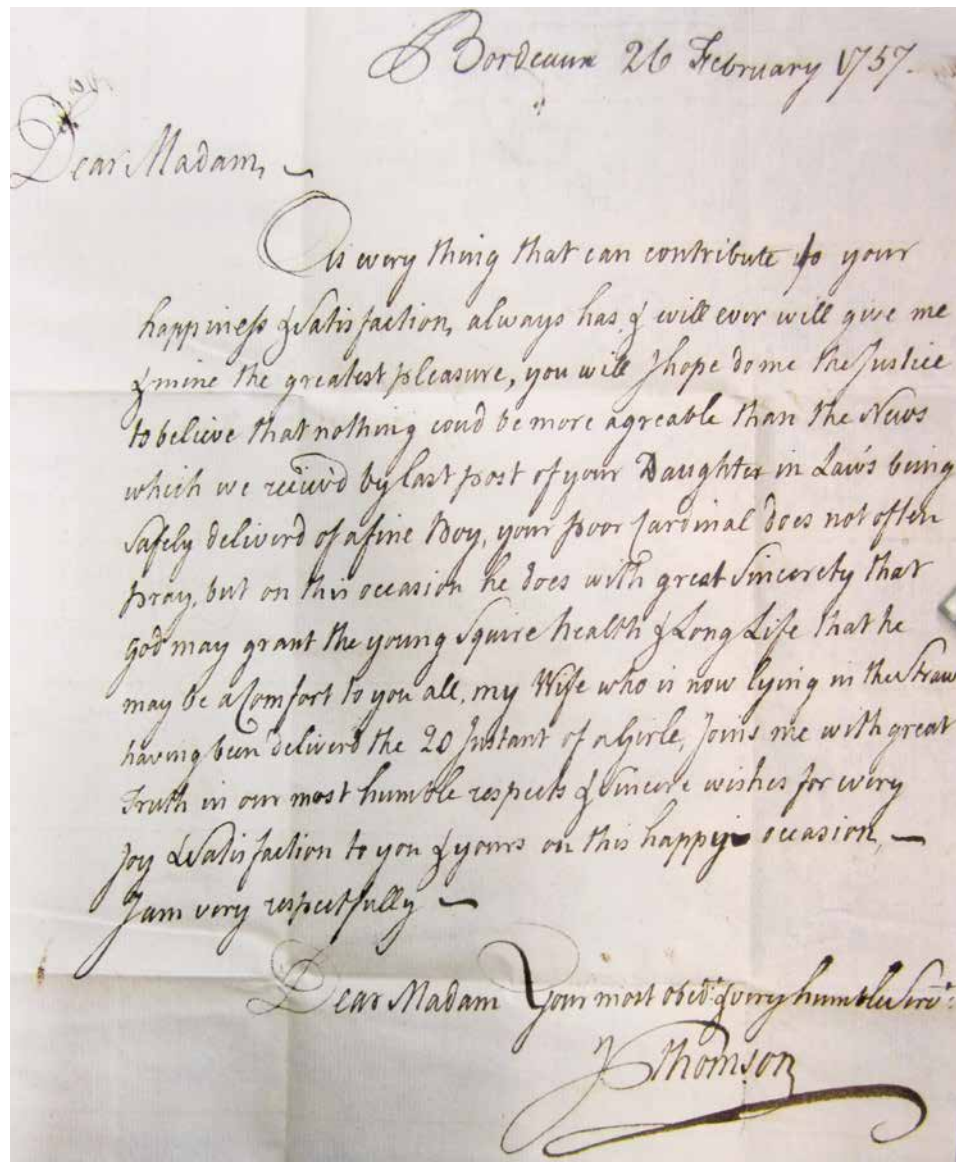

Figure 4
From John Thomson, responding to news of the birth of his employer's son: 'nothing could be more agreable than the news which we receiv'd by last post of your Daughter in Law's being safely deliverd of a fine boy, your poor Cardinal does not often pray, but on this occasion he does with great Sincerety that God may grant the young Squire health & Long Life …'

As I wod on any Other Man's Child', and is disdainful of the fact that his son is improving much faster at dancing than at speaking French: 'He is really Idle in regard to The French, But I intend to send him to the Country, Wher he must Speak it or keep his mouth shutt'.

Codd also tells his wife that he will blame her softness and indiscipline if their daughters do not turn out well. 'I expect they will avoid the too Common Custom of Dublin Girls, Such as Gadding Abroad &c, which is the fore runner of many Evills that attend Girls. Theyr Needle & Improving Books shoud be Theyr great study'.

Women

The letters to and from women provide a fascinating picture of women's lives as wives, mothers, friends, con-fidants, and informal businesswomen. Ann Nulty, for example, speaks freely on topics such as servants, clothes, the state of her hair, and the difference between what she wears in France and what might be expected of her in Ireland. She writes to her correspondent in Dublin, Ann Gordon, with the affection of a best friend. In her words, they are 'Sister Souls' – a sentiment which would not seem strange to best friends today.

One of the most engaging letters in this collection is from an Irish serving girl, Mary Flynn, writing from the Bordeaux home of an Irish wine merchant, James Babe, where she was a domestic servant. Mary had had little schooling (as evidenced by her distressing spelling and penmanship), but she is vital, cheerful, and a keen observer. To her sister Catherine Norris in Dublin she comments upon everyday comings and goings at the busy Irish residence in Bordeaux:

'First view of the port of Bordeaux, taken from the perspective of the salt works', by Joseph Vermet, 1758, oil on canvas. Image: Paris, Musee de la Marine, © RMN-Grand Palais (rights reserved).

I was working in the parler [when a gentleman] com to me and toke me by the hand [and] bed me welkim seven times and sed he com to the house very afon but never seen me and wondered I never went to see him. The ansur Mr beab mead him was that it was will he saen me ouo self and sead devil wan of me ever me shoud go to see thim if thy did not com to see me and that he did not want that thy shoud speek to me tall. My uncel frank was Greatly please att wha he sead. He suped heare the next nite. There was muskc and hear he was danssing till midnit.

Despite being far from home, Mary accounted herself 'as hapy as anny gireal that ever leaft irland'.

This is just a sample of what will be found in the Bordeaux–Dublin letters. The documents are also rich in detail on trade, material culture, food, the operation of foreign exchanges, and Irish clerical education in France. And there is much more. Most striking are the glimpses into the intimacy of family life – and the longing of loved ones to be reunited in a time of war. Publication of *The Bordeaux–Dublin Letters, 1757: Correspondence of an Irish Community Abroad* as part of the British Academy's *Records of Social and Economic History* series has made this intimate look into the private lives of members of an 18th-century expatriate community available worldwide.

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The BDL Project

Discovery of the Bordeaux–Dublin letters and a large number of supporting documents set in motion an ambitious project to mark the 20th anniversary of Glucksman Ireland House and the Irish Studies programme at New York University (NYU) in 2013. Located in the heart of Greenwich Village, Glucksman Ireland House, NYU's centre for Irish and Irish-American studies, is the site of innovative academic and public programmes, and home of the *American Journal of Irish Studies*.

There are three parts to the Bordeaux–Dublin Letters (BDL) Project: publication of a scholarly edition of the documents at the National Archives; a high-profile public exhibition in New York City; and a by-invitation academic conference featuring leading scholars from Ireland, France, the UK, and the United States.

Publication by the British Academy

The project began with preparation of the letters for publication in the British Academy's *Records of Social and Economic History* series. *The Bordeaux–Dublin Letters, 1757: Correspondence of an Irish Community Abroad* (volume 53 of the *RSEH* new series) consists of transcriptions of all 125 letters (together with translations of the 25 letters in French). The volume also includes documents associated with the legal proceeding against the *Two Sisters* of Dublin in London's High Court of Admiralty.

The book's introduction tells the story of the ship, contextualises the world of 1757, profiles the Irish community at Bordeaux, and analyses the thematic content of the letters. There are five purpose-made maps, and nine colourful plates featuring the unopened envelopes and images specific to the context of the letters. A comprehensive index will encourage use of the collection by scholars.

The volume was edited by L.M. Cullen, Professor Emeritus of Modern Irish History, Trinity College, Dublin; John Shovlin, Associate Professor of History, NYU; and Thomas M. Truxes, Clinical Associate Professor of Irish Studies and History, NYU, who discovered the documents at the National Archives (Kew) in January 2011.[1]

Exhibition

The second phase of the project – the Bordeaux–Dublin Letters exhibition in New York City – ran from October 2013 to March 2014, and drew a large number of visitors. Mounted in NYU's main exhibition hall (the Mamdouha S. Bobst Gallery at Bobst Library), the presentation brought the world of the Bordeaux–Dublin letters to life through striking visual imagery set in a magnificent public space.

The gallery, adjoining the library's twelve-storey atrium, was transformed by two dramatic 18-foot tall wall hangings depicting unopened envelopes falling out of the sky. Resplendent in their distinctive calligraphy and pristine red seals, the tumbling letters bear the addresses of recipients in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Waterford, and elsewhere in Ireland – none of whom ever received their mail.

The exhibition was divided into three self-contained sections. The first introduced the world of 1757 and the story of the *Two Sisters*' fateful journey from Bordeaux to Dublin. The second was built on a representative selection of 20 letters, organised around the sorts of broad themes discussed in this article. The exhibit's third section celebrated the impact of the Irish abroad precisely in the period of the Bordeaux–Dublin letters: one subsection of this part of the exhibit dealt with Europe

(Great Britain, Iberia, France, and the Low Countries), and the other with America (the West Indies, Newfoundland, the Middle Colonies, and the American frontier).

At the 24 October 2013 opening, Lauren Benton, Dean of New York University's Graduate School of Arts and Science, connected the letters to the historian's goal of bringing the past to life. Barbara Weinstein, Chair of the History Depart-ment at NYU, reflected on the 'lure of the archives'. The highlight of the evening was a dramatic reading of excerpts from the letters by three NYU undergraduates.

And on 13 March 2014, the exhibition was the site of an event to launch *The Bordeaux–Dublin Letters* edition, with presentations by the two New York-based editors.

Conference

The third element of the BDL Project – the Bordeaux–Dublin Letters Conference – took place at Glucksman Ireland House NYU on 24–26 October 2013. It brought together 12 distinguished scholars from Europe and the United States whose work touches on aspects of the letters and the supporting documents. Co-hosts Louis M. Cullen, John Shovlin and Thomas M. Truxes of NYU served as moderators of the conference panels. The six sessions at Glucksman Ireland House were well attended and lively, with plenty of interaction between panelists and the audience.[2] Plans are under way to publish a volume of essays arising from the conference, under the title *France, Ireland and the Atlantic in a Time of War*.

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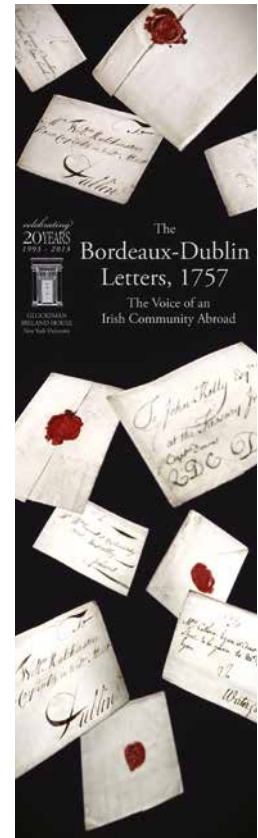
1. Further information about the edition can be found via www.britac.ac.uk/pubs/

2. More information about the conference can be found at www. irelandhouse.fas.nyu.edu/object/ne.bordeauxdublinlettersconference

The mystery of ancient Cypriot clay balls

PHILIPPA STEELE

Dr Philippa Steele is a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow in the Faculty of Classics at the University of Cambridge. In May 2014, she delivered the Evans-Pritchard Lectures at All Souls College, Oxford, on 'Society and Writing in Ancient Cyprus'.

Ancient Cyprus has produced a distinctive epigraphic record quite unlike that of any other area of the Mediterranean. During the 2nd and 1st millennia BC, its inhabitants consistently eschewed popular and efficient writing systems that were in widespread use in nearby areas – for example cuneiform and the Greek alphabet – and clung stubbornly to homegrown scripts that no outsider would be able to read.

Writing like a Cypriot

Writing first appeared on the island around the beginning of the Late Bronze Age, probably in the 16th century BC, in the form of a still undeciphered syllabic script that has traditionally been labelled 'Cypro-Minoan'. The 'Minoan' part of the word is a reference to ancient Crete, where a related writing system, Linear A, was already in use to write the mysterious Minoan language. It is usually assumed that Cypriots encountered the Cretan script via trading routes with the Minoans and adapted it for their own purposes. When they did this, they made significant changes to the script's inventory of signs in the process, and thereby created a new script: a Cypriot script. We cannot read the surviving Cypro-Minoan inscriptions, and do not know what language or languages underlie them.

Later on, however, we know that the Greek language arrived on Cyprus, beginning a Greek-speaking tradition that survives to this day: the earliest surviving Cypriot Greek inscription dates to *c.* 1000 BC. Eventually Greek speakers made their own reform of the Cypriot writing system and created another new script that we call the 'Cypriot Syllabary'. This was different from Cypro-Minoan, but was a script of the same type and with a similarly archaic appearance. The syllabary was an unwieldy system in which every sign represented an open syllable (a vowel alone, or a consonant + vowel combination, e.g. *a* or *ta*), and so not very well suited to the Greek language (the name *Philokupros* could only be rendered as *pi-lo-ku-po-ro-se*, for example). Nevertheless, Greek speakers on Cyprus stubbornly continued to use it. This went on even while the rest of the Greek-speaking world was using the much more efficient Greek alphabet, as late as the early Hellenistic period in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC.

During the 1st millennium BC, Greek was not the only language spoken on Cyprus. Phoenician speakers, using the Phoenician abjad (similar to an alphabet but representing only consonants), lived in the island's south east. There was also at least one unidentified language, known today as 'Eteocypriot' (meaning 'Aboriginal Cypriot'), probably a survival of a much earlier Cypriot language. Although the Eteocypriot inscriptions are written in the Cypriot Syllabary – which we can read because Greek was written in the same script – we cannot identify the language. It does not appear to be related to any other known language, but because very few long texts have survived we have very little evidence to go on.

Working with undeciphered scripts and unidentified languages

Looking at ancient Cypriot inscriptions over this long period of time, one gets the impression that writing was more than a utilitarian necessity. Cypriots were deliberately marking themselves out as different from the surrounding cultures of the eastern Mediterranean through their writing customs. When I was asked to give the 2014 Evans-Pritchard lectures at All Souls, Oxford, it was this apparent pride in their different and distinctive epigraphic habits that provided the theme: what was the place of writing in ancient Cypriot society and how did it relate to Cypriot identity? It was not difficult to find plentiful examples of Cypriot writing practices that look peculiar from our modern perspective, and that would undoubtedly have looked peculiar to Cyprus' Mediterranean neighbours at the time.

One might validly wonder how far we can get with trying to understand some of the surviving ancient Cypriot inscriptions, given that quite a large number cannot be read because they are written in an undeciphered script (Cypro-Minoan), or because we do not understand the language in which they are written (Cypro-Minoan and Eteocypriot), or because they are very short or damaged (many throughout). However, not being able to read the content of an inscription is not necessarily a bar to 'understanding' it in some way, for example by assessing the function of the inscribed object or the social or cultural setting in which it was used.

Cypriot clay balls

In the Late Bronze Age, one of the most distinctively Cypriot inscription types was the clay ball. Eighty examples have been found at one site alone, the now abandoned and overgrown city of Enkomi on the island's east coast (Figure 1). Two more originate from Kition and two from Hala Sultan Tekke in the south east (Figure 2). From surviving evidence, Enkomi appears to have been a predominant (perhaps *the* predominant) producer of these items. They first make an appearance in the 14th century BC, and the last one probably belongs to the 11th, making them an inscription type of particular longevity. They account for approximately a third of surviving Late Bronze Age Cypriot inscriptions.

What were the clay balls used for? This is a question that has never been answered satisfactorily. Given that they are inscribed in an undeciphered writing system, and that they are almost completely without parallel in the ancient Mediterranean and Near East, it is difficult to find direct evidence for their usage and purpose. Nevertheless, a study of the texts and their contexts can bring us closer to an answer.

The balls are typically about 1.8-2.0 cm in diameter, and roughly spherical in shape (Figure 3). They were

Figure 1
Enkomi today. Photo: courtesy of David Lightbody.

formed in wet clay, probably by rolling them in the hand, and the inscriptions were applied before the clay had fully dried. The inscriber would have had to hold the ball between the fingers and thumb of one hand, often leaving fingerprints or impressions in the clay, and apply the written signs by using some sort of pointed stylus in the other. Sometimes the inscriptions are long enough to continue around most of the ball, creating a risk of squashing some signs with the fingers while turning the ball to finish the inscription. There have even survived some uninscribed examples, some perhaps discarded because they were too small or large or too uneven in shape. Despite the awkwardness of the manufacture and inscription process, the balls seem to have remained a popular inscription type.

The arrangement of the inscription on each ball varies. Some have a single sequence of between two and eight signs (Figure 4). A smaller number have two sequences of signs, divided by a small line referred to as a 'word divider'. The greater proportion of the balls, however, have a distinctive pattern: a sequence of a few signs followed by a word divider, and after the divider a further

Figure 2
Cyprus, showing sites where clay balls have been found.

Figure 3
A clay ball from Enkomi.
Image: courtesy of Silvia Ferrara.

Figure 4
A clay ball from Enkomi.
Image: courtesy of Silvia Ferrara.

single sign. Because Cypro-Minoan remains undeciphered, the signs are referred to by a numerical system, so we might transcribe a typical clay ball inscription as, for instance, *041-028-021 | 055*. Among the balls we sometimes find that the same sequence of signs appears in more than one ball, but with a different single sign after the word divider: for example, as well as *041-028-021 | 055* in one ball, we find *041-028-021 | 019* in another. The sign after the word divider is almost certainly some sort of abbreviation, but for what?

In recent years, some fortunate finds outside Cyprus have expanded our knowledge of the clay balls subtly but significantly. One new example, inscribed in Cypro-Minoan like the

Figure 5
The Mediterranean, showing Cyprus, Tiryns and Ugarit.

others, was found at the Greek site of Tiryns, located far to the west in the Argolid area of the Peloponnese (Figure 5). Although the clay has not been tested to detect its provenance, by appearance alone it looks as though it was manufactured locally rather than having been brought over from Cyprus. Dating to the 12th century BC (following the fall of the Mycenaean palaces *c.*1200), the ball perhaps suggests that Cypriots were living at Tiryns and continuing their own distinctive writing habits abroad.

Two other clay balls have been found at Ugarit, a cosmopolitan Late Bronze Age city in modern Syria where we know multiple languages were spoken and multiple writing systems were used. Even Cypro-Minoan inscriptions turn up there, including some clay tablets. However, the clay balls from Ugarit are inscribed in cuneiform, not in Cypro-Minoan. They are the only examples that use a different writing system, and probably record a Semitic language in use at Ugarit. Their inscriptions are short, but one of them almost certainly represents a man's name, possibly Shamunu; the other may also represent a name.

Attempting to solve the mystery

If the Ugarit clay balls record names, this makes it very likely that the Cypriot clay balls record names too. We know from the archaeological record that Cyprus and Ugarit were in contact during the Late Bronze Age, and the appearance in both places of the same inscription type strongly suggests parallel usage. Making an assumption that the balls were used to record the names of individuals therefore gives us our first clue as to how they were used.

A second clue may be sought in the balls' context. The find spots of some of the Cypriot clay balls were poorly recorded, if they were recorded at all, by archaeologists working in the early 20th century before the establishment of modern working methods. However, fortunately the find spots of some were recorded meticulously, giving an opportunity to observe

where the objects might have been used. An important concentration of clay balls was found in the 'fortress building' at Enkomi. The 'fortress' was a large building whose purpose was in fact administrative rather than military, and it was in use for a large part of the Late Bronze Age, with a number of spatial reorganisations and expansions taking place over the years. The clay balls found there date to the 13th and 12th centuries BC, both before and after one reorganisation of the building in the later part of the 13th century. Even though the spatial arrangement of the building and the function of its rooms changed, it is clear that the clay balls remained an important object type utilised by the individuals operating within the building.

The excavator Porphyrios Dikaios was just one of the scholars who attempted over the years to understand the clay balls through their archaeological context. He observed that five balls originated from room 26 of the fortress building, a room marked by a series of small pits and one large one in the centre that was over 0.5 m wide and 0.8 m deep. Trying to make out a pattern in the arrangement of the pits, Dikaios assumed that they were laid out deliberately and that the function of the balls had something to do with the pits. This led to an elaborate theory about a game of 'marbles' in which the balls were thrown into the pits by players standing at the edge of the room – something akin to bagatelle on a larger scale.

Ingenious as it sounds, there is sadly little to recommend Dikaios' game of marbles. Even in room 26 the balls were not found inside the pits, which might make us question the accuracy of the 'players' in a room only a few feet wide! Furthermore, in other areas of the fortress building, clay balls were found in contexts not associated with pits, both in industrial and in residential sectors. Outside the fortress building, some of the clay balls from Enkomi, as well as those from Kition, were found associated with buildings that had religious functions, including the so-called 'House of the Ingot God' at Enkomi (leading to some suggestions that they might have been votive items used in religious rites). One of the Ugarit examples came from a tomb, but no

Cypriot example has been found in a funerary context. Overall the varied contextual associations of the clay balls suggest that they could be found or used in a variety of locations: this strongly points towards the balls being portable items, carried by individuals whether they were at work, at leisure or taking part in religious activities.

Prosopography

A study of the archaeological contexts of the clay balls is informative, but does not seem to get us much further towards understanding their function. However, the realisation that the balls might have been used or carried into multiple contexts is in itself productive. If an individual might carry the ball around in his 'pocket' all day, might this mean that it was a highly personal item? Perhaps that it had some value to the individual, despite not having intrinsic material value (being made of clay, not a precious metal or similar)? Why might such an item have carried a personal name, presumably the name of the individual who owned it? Was it marked with his name so that the individual might regain it if he lost it, or to tell it apart from clay balls owned by others?

The French scholar Émilia Masson already in the 1970s had devised a theory that might account for the distribution of the clay balls and the fact that they very probably contain names: she argued that they constituted some sort of ancient equivalent of an identity card. This would mean that they were carried by individual workers, and would be used by them, perhaps, when they 'clocked in' for the day's work; it would not be inconceivable that they might then carry them to other places by chance, resulting in the mixed distribution seen in the archaeological record. The identity card theory turns the objects into administrative tools, used by Cypriot elites to keep control of important industries – perhaps the most important of all in the Late Bronze Age Cypriot economy, namely the mining and smelting of copper, which was a major constituent of bronze.

It is difficult to prove or disprove Masson's suggestion. Whether or not the balls played a role in industrial administration, as inscriptions probably containing names they still constitute an important piece of historical evidence – even without knowing precisely what their function was, and even without being able to read the names. The discipline of prosopography, through which historians build up a picture of individuals by tracking mentions of them in written records, is relevant here. A part of Masson's identity card theory involved assuming that any Cypro-Minoan sequence that occurred in more than one clay ball referred to the same individual. For example, a man called *041-028-021* (three syllabic signs of unknown value representing a name of perhaps two or three syllables) would appear twice, in one ball with one abbreviation (*041-028-021 | 055*), and in another with a different one (*041-028-021 | 019*).

Another name found in the balls, *064-005-024* (perhaps *o-lo-le*, supplying values of the later deciphered script the Cypriot Syllabary) appears three times: twice at Enkomi and once at Hala Sultan Tekke. At Enkomi the name appears once in a typical 'sequence + abbreviation'

inscription (*064-005-024 | 046*) and once with a second sequence following (*064-005-024 | 081-008-009-072*); at Hala Sultan Tekke it appears again with a different abbreviation (*064-005-024 | 073*). For Masson these particular clay ball inscriptions were evidence of itinerant workers who might move from site to site, a man employed both at Enkomi and at Hala Sultan Tekke. However, this did not explain why the same name appeared with different abbreviations or sequences.

When the same sequence appears in more than one clay ball, it always appears with a *different* abbreviation (or occasionally another whole sequence, as above). A better way of explaining this distribution would be to assume that these were different individuals with the same name, and that the abbreviation was intended to distinguish between them. The abbreviation might stand for an occupational designation (*041-028-021* the baker and *041-028-021* the copper smelter?), or for the father's name (*o-lo-le* son of *046…* and *o-lo-le* son of *073…?*). In Eteocypriot, the later language that is thought to be a survival of one of the early Cypriot languages, we know from a tantalising bilingual inscription in Eteocypriot and Greek that there was an indigenous tradition of expressing patronymic relationships. The clay balls could then be a very early manifestation of this phenomenon.

The potential for a solution

Anyone who studies fragmentary ancient languages and writing systems will inevitably face problems such as that posed by the Late Bronze Age Cypriot clay balls. Without the aid of a time machine we may never know for certain who owned these objects and how and why they used them. Nevertheless, we can go some way to understanding something of their context and content. Recent archaeological finds such as the one at Tiryns are already furthering our knowledge of these obscure inscriptions, and further finds may follow. Advances in our understanding of the relationship between Cypriot scripts and others may also one day lead to a decipherment of Cypro-Minoan. Until then we have at least a glimpse into the use and importance of writing in ancient Cypriot society.

Hazard-human interaction in the Gobi Desert

TROY STERNBERG

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The Gobi Desert has been an iconic example of remoteness. Marco Polo wrote about the 'desert of death' in 1298, and it was not named until the French cartographer Lisle labelled the 'Gobee' in 1706. The area beyond the Great Wall was known as a '*terra nullius*', devoid of identifying features and harbouring 'barbarians to the north' (Figure 1). In the 19th century a British explorer labelled it the 'wretched desert that buried cities in sand'.[1]

The Gobi is unusual in that it is a cold desert (with temperatures as low as –40°C), in which extreme winters and drought create a harsh environment for people following a traditional agro-pastoral way of life. The dryland is home to more than 30 million residents and the world's fastest growing economy, Mongolia. But it is also China's main domestic energy source. The desert has therefore emerged as a dynamic space in a strategic geopolitical region. Today, climate change, socio-economic transition, rapid development and government policy are all acting to reconfigure the societies, the environment and our conceptions of the Gobi.

Climate hazards

In the marginal dryland, the predominant livelihoods – farming and herding – face an unforgiving natural environment. Extreme winters, drought, storms and dust challenge the lives of people dependent on the land (Figures 2, 3). In severe winters (*dzuds*), animals are unable to forage for food because of snow depth, ice cover or cold temperatures – factors that result in high livestock mortality. In the past, *dzuds* were considered effective in removing weak animals from the breeding

stock; in today's money-driven economy, *dzud* spells disaster. Most of the region's precipitation occurs in the summer, and therefore drought is particularly damaging to pasture vegetation and crops. Drought reduces harvests and restricts animal weight-gain, increasing the risk of winter starvation. Both *dzud* and drought cause or contribute to a loss of income, livelihood collapse, out-migration, and the social disruption that results.

In 2010, Mongolia experienced an intense *dzud* that was the country's 'worst ever' disaster: approximately 25 per cent of the national herd was lost. In 2011, northern China's extreme drought was the most severe since the Communist Party came to power in 1949. These critical events framed the research I undertook on 'Human-Hazard Interaction in the Gobi Desert, Asia' during my British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship. The recent disasters highlight the great exposure to, and impacts of, climate hazards in the two countries. In an era of modernisation and settlement, these hazards dominate the physical environment and have significant implications for society and governance.

Recent human change

Traditionally home to Mongolian pastoralists, the landscape has recently been reshaped. The desert has marginal productivity, yet ethnic Han farmers – originally encouraged to move into the area by Mao – have converted parts of the Chinese Gobi to cropland, drawing on groundwater sources and irrigation from the Yellow River. Over time, the Chinese experience has shifted from expanding cultivation to land degradation, desertification and vulnerability to environmental conditions.

In Mongolia, the transition from Soviet communism to democratic capitalism has opened the country to the world, and shifted responsibility from the state to households and communities. Weak governance has enabled mobile pastoralism to continue, whilst limiting the help that people may receive from authorities, and increasing their exposure to endemic natural hazards.

Across the Gobi, mining redirects policy, economics and engagement with the environment. In Mongolia, the world's largest new copper and gold mine is

1. F. Forsyth, 'On the Buried Cities in Shifting Sands of the Great Desert of Gobi', *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography, New Monthly Series*, 47 (1877), 1–18.

Figure 1
The Seldon Map (*c.* 1620, Bodleian Library) depicts the Gobi Desert as a blank space north of the Great Wall of China.
Writing identifies 'barbarians to the north' – exemplifying the external, 'foreign' concept of the Gobi.

transforming the concept of the desert and life in it, as residents ask how mining will affect pastoralism and their ability to maintain identity and culture. In China, the expanding extraction of coal, iron ore and rare earth elements has significant implications for local residents and the environment. Companies, whether state-owned enterprises in China or international corporations in Mongolia, are generating revenue and wealth that overwhelm herding and farming communities. Customary livelihoods have little power or ability to shape development, protect the grassland or benefit from large enterprises that provide new revenue sources. In fact, mining depletes water resources, degrades the landscape and minimises other livelihoods. In Mongolia, resource extraction has led to national debate and protest; in China, such engagement is not possible.

Different national responses to climate hazard

The Gobi has become a transboundary space, with hazard parameters and risks defined by country rather than the physical environment. Climate vulnerability depends on national policy, land-use practices and socio-economic factors, which differ between China and Mongolia. Community resilience – the ability to cope with and adapt to extreme events – becomes socially constructed rather than environmentally determined. The existence of two systems in one landscape allows one to question whether disasters are physical or human-driven events, and to identify the significant role of policy and governance in the desert. With states that are opposed in beliefs, perceptions of history, political systems and engagement with nature, climate extremes make clear the role of humans in determining hazard exposure and landscape sustainability.

Climate hazards highlight both the vulnerability and the resilience of households and communities to extreme events. There are two main processes in managing and reducing exposure to hazards. The first is the adoption of effective coping strategies, such as adapting livelihood practices to environmental conditions. The second is to improve response capability by providing support and infrastructure to reduce the impact of events. Both processes will reflect the history of a region and its society, as well as the government's interaction with and interest in rural areas. The first acknowledges and encompasses natural conditions and limitations; the second depends on human action in a created system.

Mongolia exemplifies adaptation to the environment.

Figure 2
Snow-covered winter camp and animal corral in Mongolia.

Figure 3
Dust storm, farming region, Gansu, China.

Herders' traditional practices mitigate natural forces through migration, animal selection, herd numbers, camp location, reserve pastures and livestock offtake. However, when disaster occurs, the state has little response capability, exacerbating a process that in 2010 triggered a downward spiral of ever-greater animal mortality and livelihood loss.

In China, strong state control limits residents' ability to maintain their customary coping strategies or adjust cropping and herding patterns to physical conditions. Indeed, policy can create new risk by supporting measures that have negative consequences. For example, farmers are encouraged to erect plastic greenhouses that are shredded by the wind, and fencing and restricted access to pasture contribute to high levels of land degradation. However, infrastructure and support enable the state to respond with emergency aid, fodder for livestock, new irrigation or wells for farmers, and loans and subsidies that can reduce the impact of disaster.

Thus, in the Gobi's shared environment, Mongolia lessens vulnerability before a hazard occurs, but lacks post-event resilience. China's manipulated environment displaces risk from natural factors to anthropogenic forces; this creates new forms of vulnerability at the local scale, yet when disaster strikes the system is better able to cope.

Contrasting hazard environments

In the transborder region, policy and governance have redefined the environment. Chinese programmes of 'Ecological Resettlement' remove herders from the rangeland, the 'Grain to Green' policy aims to turn farmland and pasture back to grassland, and the 'Three North Shelterbelts' project attempts to plant 56 billion trees by 2050 to combat desertification. A standard government edict was handed out in June 2013 (Figure 4) by the Grassland Surveillance and Supervision Administration, reminding herders to remove livestock from open pasture under penalty of fines and confiscation, whilst also stating that herders could return in 10 years' time once the ecosystem has recovered. In practice, such

pastures are often converted to agricultural use or mining operations. Settlement is encouraged positively through loans, compensation, subsidised basic housing and barns, or negatively through taxes, fencing, swipe-card control of water access, confiscation, fines or coercion. Such programmes do not consider climate, exposure or ability to maintain livelihoods in new conditions. Settlement makes maintaining traditional livelihoods difficult, and encourages an exodus of young people into towns or out-migration to jobs elsewhere. An ethnic component finds minorities, as former pastoralists, the frequent target of resettlement.

Mongolia presents a stark contrast to China, being characterised by weak governance and insignificant policy impact or relevance to rural life. Herd numbers, mobility, migration and settlement are household decisions based on environmental factors, customary practices and, now, economic forces. When a disaster like the 2010 *dzud* occurs, limited preparation and response exacerbates hardship and increases animal mortality. Lack of government engagement stems from limited funds, a vast territory and a low population – factors that make sufficient infrastructure for disaster response financially unfeasible. The government looks to the international community (the UN and donor countries) for disaster aid, yet help is difficult to provide in the harsh conditions and remote locations. Limited preparation and a lack of outside relief leave pastoralists responsible for hazard mitigation and community/livelihood well-being.

The outcome is that there are two distinct hazard environments in the arid landscape. One is environmentally based and functions on customary practices. The other is a constructed region focused on reshaping nature to meet definite though not always clearly delineated objectives. Mongolia offers flexibility though limited response; China has reconfigured rural engagement based on infrastructure, development and restricted grassland access. Table 1 identifies some of the notable differences between the two countries and highlights the challenge to reduce hazard impact, encourage local knowledge and mitigation, and provide adequate government support in extreme conditions.

Figure 4
Grassland eviction notice, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, June, 2013. The notice states that the region is becoming a desert and that 'we have all suffered'. Move your herds from the restricted area; do this or you will be fined 30 Yuan (£3) per animal. 'We hope our herder friends will co-operate and move animals out of the prohibited area'. It states that 8 per cent of the province and 75 per cent of the local district (unnamed) is degraded (141,866 km2 in total).

Table 1
Physical and social factors that affect hazard dynamics in the Gobi region of China and Mongolia with regard to climate disaster.

	CHINA	MONGOLIA
HAZARD IMPACT – OVERALL	LOW	HIGH
GOVERNMENT	STRONG	WEAK
ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION	MODERATE to HIGH	LOW
MOBILE PASTORALISM	NO	HIGH
AGRICULTURE	YES	NO
DZUD/WINTER IMPACT	LOW	HIGH
GOVERNMENT POLICY	HIGH	LOW
INFRASTRUCTURE	GOOD	POOR
ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES and NGOs	NO	YES

Local impacts, global impacts

Livelihood desires and pressures, climate hazards, marginal resources (water and land) and mining are transforming the Gobi countryside. The undercurrent is the theme of 'closing down the grasslands' of the region. In China, a process of settlement, fencing and restriction speaks to an intentional removal of residents from remote areas into villages and towns. In Mongolia, the challenges of coping with extreme climate events, limited support and a modernising society are changing the role, but not the relevance, of herding livelihoods. New choices have prompted a drift away from the countryside and question the future viability of pastoralism.

Research on the Gobi may seem removed from greater global trends. Yet an understanding of processes at a regional level enabled me to comprehend links between events in China and political change in the Middle East.

A drought in the agricultural region bordering the Gobi in winter 2011 threatened China's winter wheat harvest, which was an issue of great concern to the government since food supply remains a sensitive issue for the Communist Party as a proxy for social stability. China's purchase of wheat on the international commodity market was followed by a rise in global wheat prices that coincided with a shortage in the world's largest wheat importer – Egypt. This was a pivotal event, as bread prices skyrocketed in Egypt and contributed to social unrest.

The political result is well-known; the academic path took much longer. In April 2011 my short piece on how regional drought could have global implications was published in *Nature*.[2] By March 2012 my article 'Chinese drought, bread and the Arab Spring' had been peer-reviewed and published.[3] A year later the idea of how a climate hazard in China influenced the civil unrest in the Middle East was the subject of a *New York Times* opinion article. This reflects what can be a tortuous process of bringing academic research to a public audience.

The Gobi Desert embodies the risks faced by marginal environments in their exposure to climate events. Today, increased warming and volatile precipitation patterns affect agro-pastoral livelihoods that are environmentally-dependent; changes in development, desires and perceptions suggest that inhabitants face an uncertain future. Research shows that the ability to protect against hazards exists as a combination of integrating natural resilience with adequate preparation and response by residents and governments. Balancing climate hazard impact on communities, policy decisions and mining will challenge and reshape the Gobi for years to come.[4]

2. T. Sternberg, 'Regional drought has a global impact', *Nature*, 472 (2011), 169.
3. T. Sternberg, 'Chinese drought, bread and the Arab Spring', *Applied Geography*, 34 (2012), 519-24.
4. See also Troy Sternberg, 'Tradition and Transition in the Mongolian Pastoral Environment', in Troy Sternberg and Dawn Chatty (eds), *Modern Pastoralism and Conservation: Old Problems, New Challenges* (Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 2013), pp. 141-159.

Reflections on building an inclusive higher education system in Myanmar

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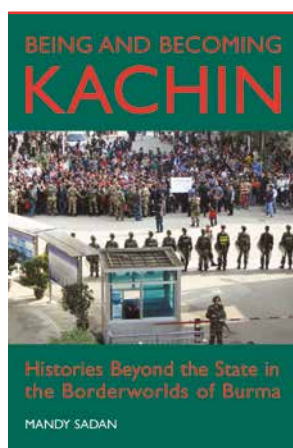
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In the following article, Dr Sadan considers the implications of the recent changes in Burma for the development of an inclusive higher education system.

1. The name of the country internationally was officially changed from Burma to Myanmar in 1989. However, for many years those with associations with the pro-democracy movement objected to this change and persisted in calling it Burma, as did most western governments. In recent years, following signs of political change, there has been a marked inclination towards using Myanmar in international discourse. Many of those who previously objected to the change now state rather naively that 'Myanmar' reflects a notion of the country which incorporates a broader ethnic constituency than just the Burman grouping alone and therefore stands as a symbol of non-Burman hegemonic claims over the national identity. This is in reality a very simplistic argument. However, in line with 'good' diplomatic practice, this article will use both terms of reference and readers may insert their own term of choice as appropriate.

2. The present Constitution, which is highly controversial, was instituted in 2008. The bar against those who have married foreigners becoming President was widely, and not unrealistically, assumed to be directly targeted to inhibit the ambition of Aung San Suu Kyi and her supports in this regard.

3. Seven days was the norm for many decades.

4. His book *From the Land of Green Ghosts: A Burmese Odyssey* was published by Harper Collins in 2002 and details his personal flight from Burma and subsequent studies at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, with the support of Professor John Casey.

Even those with only a passing interest in international affairs cannot fail to have noticed that some rather remarkable changes have been taking place in Burma (Union of Myanmar) in recent years.[1] Most obviously, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest in 2010; and then in 2012, alongside other newly elected members of her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), she took up a seat in the newly convened Myanmar Parliament. Elections have been set for 2015 and, despite the constitutional bar against someone who has married a foreigner assuming such high office, many expect that it may not be long before Aung San Suu Kyi achieves her stated goal of becoming President.[2]

Following these events, a country to which access was limited for decades through restrictive visas,[3] and which was considered by many in the west to be a pariah, suddenly became the destination of choice for many leading international politicians. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the UK's Foreign Minister William Hague visited in quick succession, at the end of 2011 and in early 2012. Most strikingly, this was followed by Aung San Suu Kyi's own long-awaited return to Oxford. Oxford had been her home for many years as a student at St Hugh's College, and then when she was married to Oxford academic Michael Aris, a Fellow of St Antony's. The speed of change seemed baffling, exciting, unexpected and substantive, and Aung San Suu Kyi's return to Oxford seemed to encapsulate this remarkable process of positive transition.

These events have triggered new possibilities for academic engagement with Myanmar, too. Some notable academics-cum-activists have been able to return home after living in exile for many years – such as Kiriyama Prize-winning author, Pascal Khoo Thwe.[4] It suddenly became possible for those involved in research about Burma to consider holding seminars and workshops within the country, even on issues that were still politically very sensitive in some cases. Whereas previously, if one had tried to develop a research project that involved hosting an event in Yangon such activities would have been considered with suspicion ('The bloodied hands of which General have been shaken to make this possible?' was the implicit reaction), it

suddenly seemed impossible to get funding *unless* one held a 'capacity building' event locally. Of course, there were and are limits to what was and is possible, but the simple fact that events can now take place that were not even conceivable before has been a remarkable enough difference for those of us who had been forced to work more 'creatively' in the past if we wanted to engage with local researchers. In the UK, too, I also soon noticed an increased number of emails in my inbox from graduate students and others hoping to go to Burma and wanting advice. It was as if Burma/Myanmar had just been 'discovered' by academia again, and everyone suddenly seemed to want to get in on the action.

2013 delegation on higher education

In light of these opportunities, and reflecting the incredibly poor state of the Myanmar education system as a whole after decades of military dictatorship, in May 2013 a delegation from various government departments in Myanmar came to the UK to discuss ideas for the development of the higher education system there. The visit had been supported by the British Council, and it was intended that findings from the visit would feed back into discussions in Aung San Suu Kyi's Parliamentary Committee on higher education and the related committee set up to oversee the reinvigoration of Yangon University. Founded as Rangoon University in 1920, it was widely believed to have been one of the foremost higher education institutions in Asia at its peak. However, decades of neglect and political control have rendered it presently incapable of functioning as a prestigious national university fit for the future. Aung San Suu Kyi addressed the group attending the seminar in London via a video message, and asked for external help with a fast track to improvement. The focus of concern was clearly on improving Yangon and Mandalay universities (with Yangon given priority), although this might help to raise the level of others over time.

This visit was undoubtedly an important moment of reconnection between the higher education sectors of Myanmar and the UK. It was also an opportunity to hear more about the educational vision of the delegates. But the lack of direct reference to anywhere beyond the central Burma region was striking.

My research

My own work in Burma – which has been supported by the British Academy through a Postdoctoral Fellowship, and most recently by the publication of a monograph in the related series – has always been slightly at a tangent to the mainstream. It has been concerned principally not with the dominant Burmano-Buddhist narrative of the country's national history, but rather with the production of ethno-nationalist ideologies and conflict in the country's borderworlds. Most specifically, I have been working for many years on issues relating to the Kachin region of the country and associated areas in north-east India and Yunnan in China. This is a complex, challenging environment in which to work, and I am deeply grateful to the British Academy, which gave me 'the iron rice bowl' of support as a Postdoctoral Fellow, for enabling me to push the boundaries of my

Map showing the position of the Kachin State in Burma. The shaded areas in India, China and Thailand, together with the Kachin State, are the 'borderworlds' where Kachin and related minority groups live.

own knowledge about this subject.

One of Burma's most notable, yet unfortunate, characteristics has been that for the whole of its modern independent existence it has been wracked by internal conflicts. All sections of its borderlands (and sometimes areas deep inside its inner territory) have witnessed extended periods of armed conflict. Communist and anti-communist insurgencies, sub-national armed groups, and endemic narco-economy-fuelled violence have all crowded in upon each other within Burma's borders over decades. Some conflicts have continued for decades; others have demonstrated a tragic tendency to re-emerge when weakly constructed ceasefires have collapsed in the absence of real political progress at the centre. Many of the country's 'peripheries' hoped for greater autonomy when Burma gained independence, and the subsequent failure of those aspirations is at the root of many of these longstanding armed movements.

My book is an attempt to understand the manifestation of such violence in the Kachin region. Its publication has particular relevance given events in recent years. Despite all the apparently positive changes at the centre of the country, a 17-year-long ceasefire between the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) and the Burma Army broke down in June 2011. This has been rather inconvenient for those who wish to present a simple narrative of Burma as a country on track to positive political change. Many in the Kachin region, as elsewhere, are less than convinced that the changes taking place are likely to produce significant new political structures of the kind that they feel are necessary to balance out the inequalities between Myanmar's centre and periphery.

The relationship between education in Myanmar and ethnic conflict

Their experience of the national education system contributes greatly to how many non-Burman communities perceive discrimination and marginalisation. My own book deals with educational discrimination as a continuous thread in the narrative of ethno-nationalist resistance. This is an issue that seems to have been inadequately acknowledged by those currently discussing the rejuvenation of the higher education system. Perhaps it relates to a perception that border areas are peopled by 'the primitive', the 'tribal' – all of which act as metaphors for the 'uneducated' – for whom a university education is assumed to be aspiration rather than an experience. This misses the historical point that, while ordinary people, usually from rural areas, have been drawn into the manifold armed movements around the country as soldiers, both willingly and unwillingly, the early leadership roles of many ethno-nationalist elites were in fact formed through networks created in the general and higher education systems of Burma in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Burmese school and higher education systems were often formative social experiences for many of those who mobilised and organised the first armed opposition movements in the Kachin region. A group known as the Seven Stars, who went on to help found

A group of Kachin students outside Yangon University, where they performed 'traditional' dances during the university's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in 1995. At this time, the university was open briefly and students were being rushed through their degrees. Throughout the 1990s, the university was repeatedly closed because of student protests. The early Rangoon (later Yangon) University student leadership of the KIA/KIO also promoted cultural activities of this kind to consolidate a sense of political and cultural identity among Kachin students. Photograph courtesy of Hkanhpa Tu Sadan.

the KIO/KIA, for example, emerged through Rangoon (Yangon) University. Their experience of the school system and of university life in the capital was a negative one, and refined their own sense of nationalism in opposition to the new Burmese state. Today too, the educated, urbanised, technologically savvy young men and women who have been mobilising support for the KIA, and organising relief provision to the many tens of thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) along the border with China, are also products of the general Burmese education system, and many of its higher education institutions. They speak and write Burmese fluently, they understand Burmese politics and know fully what is going on.

But in the current debates about higher education reform, there seems to be no serious reflection on the historical influence of that system – even when it functioned 'at its best' – in creating experiences of social and educational discrimination that for many helped to justify the production of armed opposition movements. Reinvigorating Yangon University without addressing some of the social issues affecting wider relations between communities, or recognising that higher education systems can engage proactively to bring change in those relations, will result in limited impact on these other discourses of marginalisation and discrimination. Indeed, reform in higher education may even serve as a mirror that reflects them more clearly if it is badly handled.

Higher education provision in the Kachin State

The capital of the Kachin State, Myitkyina, has its own local university. Yet many of the bright, energetic young men and women who are currently so active in the political affairs of Kachin region have in recent

years actively avoided Myitkyina University, and their parents also dissuade them from attending. Since the ceasefire of 1994, the perception of many parents in this region is that their children are more likely to come out of that institution with a serious heroin addiction than a worthwhile degree.[5] This is incredibly sad in an environment where the call for educational access has been central to the social demands of the ethno-nationalist movement from the early 1900s.

Kachin political elites expected educational development to be a foundation stone for the economic development of their region when independence from Britain came in 1948. Indeed, without it they felt that the newly constituted Kachin State would wither and die. The need for access to good, equitable, community-embedded education has been a constant, unchanging refrain for more than a century.[6] Instead, many young Kachin people feel that the underdevelopment of their local university is part of a 'conspiracy' by the Burmese state to undermine their intellectual and physical well-being. It is seen as part of a more sinister objective to 'destroy' Kachin identity and 'Burmanise' the region. Such is the manner in which ideologies of ethno-nationalist resistance are produced and sustained. It does beg the question, however, as to why the rejuvenation of local institutions should *not* be given equal priority with that of Yangon and Mandalay if there is any serious commitment to dealing substantively with the social issues that have underpinned ethnic conflict in the regions for so many decades. Failure to pay attention to these serious local circumstances only fuels the perceptions of threat.

Opportunities

If attention could be paid to bringing key local institutions like Myitkyina University up to standard in tandem with the reinvigoration of Yangon, not leaving them simply to catch up when they can, it might demonstrate the sincerity of those on all sides of the political divide in Burma's national politics in engaging with the views and experiences of those beyond the heartland and in bringing socially transformative change for all. How wonderful might it be to have a locally embedded, autonomous yet state-supported research institution that was relevant to all local communities (and not just those identifying as 'Kachin'), and capable of producing cutting-edge research involving local collaboration with academics from Burma and beyond. This would be of benefit to all.

The Kachin region is notable as a world bio-diversity hotspot, yet it is currently challenged by the prospect of large-scale hydro-power projects and aggressive resource extraction. Its flora and fauna have barely been enumerated. And there are significant local traditions of medicinal usage of plants which, running in tandem with rich and diverse cultural, social and linguistic traditions, are equally vital; but these too are threatened. Local knowledge that could be channelled through academic engagement in a locally embedded research institute could do much to support this region's political and economic aspirations.

Inclusive narratives

Educational policy and the societies in which educational institutions are embedded are never fixed and unchanging. In the UK too, we are struggling with the issue of what an ethnically and religiously diverse country should look like, and how we might have to learn and relearn our national history to reflect this social diversity. It is, and always will be, a work in progress to ensure that our universities are 'fit for purpose'. Higher education systems have an important role to play in developing these new understandings within societies. I wonder whether the day might come when a revitalised Yangon University will have its own Blue Plaque stating 'This is the Founding Place of the KIO' in recognition that more than one reading of this institution is possible. In a truly inclusive and diverse nation, permitting such narratives may strengthen rather than undermine the whole. Perhaps this is the kind of vision that needs to be encouraged more explicitly through some of the higher education committees that are deliberating in the country's capital at Naypyitaw. And perhaps foreign academics involved in the contemporary 'rediscovery' of Myanmar should familiarise themselves with these concerns as they embark on a new set of encounters and research relationships.

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5. There are many reports from local and international NGOs that detail the dramatic expansion of heroin addiction among young people in the region, especially since the ceasefire of 1994.
6. This is sometimes rather simplistically characterised as being inevitably premised on a demand for educational provision in local languages, which the state education system prohibited. However, the development of this argument is more complex that this alone suggests, as detailed in my research.

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