

British Academy Review • 27

MUSIC, HISTORY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN WEST AFRICA

Also

The generation
behind the 1916
Easter Rising

Making sense
of the headlines



The articles in this issue give a flavour of the range of activities undertaken by the British Academy in the last six months. And there are also articles showcasing the work of British Academy-supported early career academics.

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Cover: Hunters travelling with *donsongoni* ('hunters' harps') to a celebration of the hunters' association in Mali, demonstrating the importance of music for cultural identity in West Africa. Photo: Lucy Durán



BRITISH
ACADEMY

for the humanities and social sciences

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

The Academy is an independent, self-governing organisation of 1,000 Fellows (with a further 300 overseas) elected for their distinction in research. The British Academy's mission is: to inspire, recognise and support high achievement in the humanities and social sciences throughout the UK and internationally, and to champion their role and value.

The British Academy's work is shaped by six strategic priorities.

1. Championing the Humanities and Social Sciences

Our objective is to take a lead in representing the humanities and social sciences, promoting their interests and vigorously upholding their value.

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Our objective is to stimulate public interest in and understanding of the humanities and social sciences, and to contribute to public debate.

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Our objective is to promote UK research in international arenas, to foster a global approach across UK research and to provide leadership in developing global research links and expertise.

Further information about the work of the Academy can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk

The shifting landscape in higher education and research

Jonathan Matthews and **Thomas Kohut**, of the British Academy's Higher Education Policy Team, explain the issues and concerns surrounding a number of recent Government initiatives affecting higher education and research in the UK.

The shifting landscape

Changes to elements of the higher education (HE) and research landscape have recently been sketched out by the Government in its higher education Green Paper¹ and in the Nurse Review of the Research Councils.² Together with the announcement in December 2015 of a review – to be led by Lord Stern (President of the British Academy) – of how research funding is assessed through the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the funding and assessment architecture in the UK could shift dramatically in the coming years.

The focus of the Green Paper is the planned Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). This originally stems from a Conservative Party manifesto promise, and the Minister's foreword emphasises the need for a focus on teaching excellence, so that students can know what constitutes 'value for money', and so that Government can be confident students gain 'skills' that make them employable as a result of university training.

In terms of the mechanics of this new system for assessing teaching quality, it is anticipated that the TEF will start with an early version in 2016/17, in which all universities that have met the current quality assurance threshold will pass at 'Level 1'. This will entitle universities at Level 1 to raise fees along with inflation from 2017/18. Further levels (potentially four) will then be established, in which the intention seems to be to set a maximum fee for each level of award.

1. *Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*, Cm 9141 (6 November 2015).

2. *Ensuring a successful UK research endeavour: A Review of the UK Research Councils*, by Paul Nurse (19 November 2015).

The Green Paper's proposals came shortly before the report of the Nurse Review of the Research Councils. As such, it merely hinted at a simplification of the research landscape, referring to a need to merge back-office functions, as suggested in the 2014 Triennial Review of Research Councils. It also pointed to a need to lower the burden of conducting the REF through a 'greater use of metrics and other measures to "refresh" the REF results and capture emerging pockets of research excellence in between full peer review.'³

Importantly, the Green Paper stated a commitment to the dual support system for research through 'dual funding streams' – which currently come through the Research Councils and, for Quality Related (QR) funds, through the Higher Education Funding Councils. But it muddied the waters around who would have responsibility for administering each stream, given the suggested re-shaping of the role of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), including establishing a new regulator, the Office for Students.

The Nurse Review of the Research Councils proposes the creation of a new body, Research UK, which would be led by a single Chief Executive Officer with responsibility for reporting to Government. Within Research UK, the integrity of the existing seven Research Councils would be maintained. It is not clear whether the intention is that the administration of QR funds would be taken over by a newly established Research UK and, in his appearance before the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, Sir Paul Nurse did not seem to have any firm recommendation on this either way.

How the British Academy is engaging in the debate

The HE and research community was of course consulted as part of the Nurse Review: the British Academy submitted a strong response. And the Academy has continued

3. *Fulfilling our Potential*, p. 73.

to engage on behalf of the humanities and social sciences disciplines in its recent response to the consultation on the Green Paper, where comments are made on the new structures outlined in the Green Paper and Nurse Review combined.⁴

Indeed, by not conceiving of the HE and research system as a whole, Government risks developing a system of policy and regulation that does not reflect the ways in which universities operate. It is essential that the consequences of these separate reviews are considered by Government together. The framing of teaching and employability (in the Green Paper) separately from structural changes to the Research Councils (in the Nurse Review), and research assessment (in the forthcoming Stern Review), could result in a new system that is disjointed.

Teaching Excellence Framework

Take first the proposals for the TEF. The main challenges of a teaching excellence assessment system are establishing a robust and shared definition of quality, its measurement, and the evidence for poor quality in the first place. The British Academy has stressed the need to analyse with rigour the evidence that teaching, across disciplines, is indeed ‘the poor cousin to research’⁵ that Government appears to think it is.

Additionally, the metrics that are and will be used to measure teaching quality have not yet been detailed by Government. Is what constitutes teaching ‘quality’ uniform across disciplines? Any system would need flexibility and a degree of discipline specificity, and it is helpful that the Green Paper makes this clear. The Academy has suggested that Government should work closely with the four national academies⁶ across disciplines to assemble evidence on what this means in practice. The use of metrics to assess teaching quality should be done with caution, particularly in the case of student opinion. At the least, any measures that are relied upon in an initial round of TEF should be examined by expert panels who are able to contextualise the metrics employed.

The separation of teaching and research

Perhaps more fundamentally, the apparent separation of research and teaching risks making research-led teaching less likely, and this is often teaching of the best quality. Reflecting on the new structures outlined in the Green Paper and Nurse Review combined, the British Academy has expressed concern at the apparent lack of one body with overall oversight of the higher education and research landscape. Vulnerability in a subject may exist across both teaching and research, and co-ordination of the two will be more challenging if they are separated in the proposed new structure. It would have an impact

4. The British Academy responded to the Nurse Review of Research Councils on 24 April 2015, and to the Green Paper consultation on 15 January 2016. Both responses can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/policy/responsetogov.cfm

5. *Fulfilling Our Potential*, p. 8.

6. The British Academy, the Royal Society, the Royal Academy of Engineering, and the Academy of Medical Sciences.

on the subjects themselves, right through the system to postgraduate and postdoctoral level, and into the research system and the future supply of researchers.

The choices of students at undergraduate level will continue to impact on the behaviour of universities, particularly on whether or not certain courses will be offered year on year. It is possible that some subjects will be placed under greater pressure, across disciplines, as student numbers drop, or as they are deemed too expensive to be taught with the same fee level. The threat here is not only to the financial sustainability of universities and the viability of courses, but to the long-term supply of UK expertise, expertise that plays a central role in driving productivity and tackling our most pressing global challenges.⁷

Government must give serious consideration to how this system-wide risk is monitored. If this function is not yet assigned to any of the new institutions proposed by these changes, the Government should involve the national academies in discussing potential solutions, to ensure that this particular kind of systemic risk to subjects is monitored and acted upon.

Lessons from the REF and the importance of dual support

Any new system for measuring the quality of teaching must learn lessons from the assessing of quality in research, and be wary of creating too much burden, or setting in motion incentives that are undesirable. The Government should be aware that linking teaching quality to a system of funding will result in much game-playing by institutions, as is already evident with the REF. The risk is that effort will be placed not on actually improving quality, but on the goal of securing greater fees by adapting to the system and scoring highly according to particular metrics.

It may be worth returning to the positioning of teaching within REF – in the most recent REF 2014, departments were not able to enter teaching as a measure of research impact. It is the view of many Fellows of the British Academy that teaching is a key way in which their research has wider impact and benefit – both through the benefits that students gain directly and the ideas that are passed on through those students’ professional lives.

The British Academy has undertaken a significant amount of work on the Research Excellence Framework. Following a thorough consultation process of the Fellowship and Academy award-holders more broadly, it is clear that there is concern about three aspects of REF 2014 in particular: (1) the need to reduce the burden of the exercise; (2) the need to ensure that the behaviours the exercise encourages are beneficial; and (3) the importance of developing a mechanism for recognising the wider benefits of research that has the confidence of both the research community and Government.

Lord Stern has been asked by Government to chair an independent review of research funding in the UK,

7. The British Academy responded to the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee inquiry on the Productivity Plan on 15 September 2015.

specifically through the REF. The secretariat is being provided by Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS), and the review is scheduled to report in June/July 2016.

Perhaps the crucial point to make here is that, however TEF and REF evolve, in this shifting landscape, the dual support system is central to the continued success

and strength of the UK's research base. Every possible step must be taken to maintain it in any new structure to ensure that QR funding retains its essential characteristics: excellence funded wherever it is found, for curiosity-driven, bottom-up research, allowing universities flexibility to make their own decisions about fostering and developing the research environment.

British Academy Schools Language Awards 2015



The winners of the 2015 British Academy Schools Language Awards, at the British Academy on 15 December. Photo: Will Ireland.

As part of its work in fostering the health of the humanities and social sciences, the British Academy runs a programme to promote wider appreciation of the importance of language learning.

In December, the British Academy welcomed the winners of the 2015 British Academy Schools Language Awards. This was the fourth consecutive year the British Academy had held its Schools Language Awards, and they have gone from strength to strength.

To celebrate excellence in language learning, and to support activities that encourage larger numbers of students to take languages to higher levels, the Academy awarded 14 prizes of £4,000 for innovative and creative projects at schools, colleges, universities and other organisations – with two 'National Winners' each receiving an additional £2,000.

The British Academy hopes that the 14 fantastic winners can become hubs of good practice in their region and beyond.

More information on the winners and their projects can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/baslas/

Getting ahead of the curve

What next for Scotland and the Union?

ALUN EVANS



Alun Evans has been Chief Executive of the British Academy since July 2015.¹ In his previous role, he headed the Scotland Office, the Whitehall department which made the case for Scotland to remain part of the UK in the Scottish independence referendum in September 2014.

On 16 September 2015, Alun Evans gave his Chief Executive's Inaugural Lecture on 'Getting ahead of the curve: How to stop playing catch up on Scotland', offering some personal reflections on events leading up to and following from the Scottish referendum. In this article based on that lecture, he focuses on the hurly-burly of the 2014 referendum campaign, and his own suggestions for securing a long-term future for the Union.



The full lecture can be heard via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/gettingahead/

On 16 September 2014 – and in one of the clearest signs that the 300-year-old Treaty of Union was at risk – the three main UK party leaders (David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg) published their famous 'Vow' on the front page of the *Daily Record*, Scotland's biggest selling paper. In that vow they made a commitment to further devolution to Scotland in the event of a 'No' vote in the independence referendum, which was only 48 hours away. Some saw this as a panic reaction. The No campaign was firmly on the back foot. The Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Yes campaign appeared to be calling most of, if not all of, the shots in the Scottish referendum campaign – notwithstanding the

1. An interview with Alun Evans was published in *British Academy Review*, 26 (Summer 2015).

return of Gordon Brown, who made some barnstorming speeches in defence of the Union. The supporters of the Union seemed to be perennially 'behind the curve' and playing a game of 'catch up' with the independence bandwagon.

Publicly the Yes campaign appeared to be in the ascendency, with far fewer public displays of support for the No or Better Together campaign.

Then on 18 September 2014 – and on a turnout which was the highest in a national poll or referendum since the Second World War – 45 per cent of the population of one part of the United Kingdom voted to leave the Union. Had the vote gone differently – and in favour of Scottish independence – we would now be in the midst of the most complex and contentious negotiations between two democratic and legitimate governments, to break up the 1707 Treaty of Union, and to create the conditions for Scotland to become an independent nation state, separate from the remainder of the United Kingdom.

And since the referendum, the SNP has still been calling all the shots. The Yes campaign – which lost the referendum by over 10 per cent of the votes – has maintained the initiative. The referendum was meant to settle the issue for a generation. It didn't even do so for a year.

In this article, I try to answer the following questions:

- How and why did the Scottish National Party (SNP) become such a dominant force in Scotland, both up to and since the referendum?
- What might the future hold? Is a second referendum inevitable at some point? And what might supporters of the Union do if they wish to avert independence second time around?

The elections of 2010 and 2011

When the SNP first gained power as a minority Government, elected in 2007 with only one seat more than Labour, few expected it could last out a full four-year term. But it did. Alex Salmond, although not universally popular,

was an effective First Minister. One of his first acts was to rename and rebrand the former Scottish Executive as the Scottish Government. Without a parliamentary majority Alex Salmond showed, through this and other actions to raise the profile of the Scottish Government, that there is a lot more to effective government than constantly legislating. Perhaps there may be a wider lesson here for the Westminster Parliament and beyond.

In 2010 and 2011 expectations were turned on their head. In 2010 after the General Election in the United Kingdom, and for the first time since the Second World War, a formal coalition emerged under an electoral system which it had been argued had the benefit of producing single-party governments. A year later in the Scottish election, and under an electoral system which many had argued would tend to produce coalitions or minority government, the contrary happened. With 42 per cent of the votes and only 22 per cent of the electorate who voted, Alex Salmond and the SNP emerged triumphant – winning 69 out of the 129 seats.

In its manifesto the SNP had committed to holding a referendum on Scottish independence and so entered into negotiations with the UK Government.

For its part, the UK Government had already acted on the recommendations of the Calman Commission and was pushing ahead with plans for further devolution – which would be introduced via the Scotland Act 2012. But, as ever, Salmond and the SNP appeared to be setting the agenda. The Westminster Government was playing what I have called ‘catch up’ with the Scottish Government. Alex Salmond was ‘making the political weather’, using his electoral mandate to seek the power from the Westminster Government to hold a Yes/No referendum on Scottish independence. Which was what happened. The negotiations were led for the Scottish Government by Nicola Sturgeon, the Deputy First Minister, and for the UK by the Scottish Secretary, Michael Moore. Between them they crafted the plans for the referendum, encapsulated in the Edinburgh Agreement of October 2012. The UK Government rejected the Scottish Government’s pleas in the negotiations for the inclusion of the so-called ‘Devo Max’ option to be on the ballot paper. So the Agreement eventually allowed only for the decisive Yes/No referendum to be held before the end of 2014.

The referendum campaign

There followed a two-year, bitterly fought, intensive and divisive campaign. The battleground for the referendum revolved around a number of recurring themes – currency, the economy, defence, welfare, energy and cultural heritage. The UK and Scottish Governments engaged in claim and counterclaim, winning ground one day and then losing it the next, in the electoral equivalent of trench warfare.

Constitutionally it was fascinating. Here were two wholly legitimate democratic governments within the same country, each arguing for polar opposites in policy terms. There could be only one winner and it would take two years to find out who that would be.

I was the head of the UK Government department responsible for Scotland – the Scotland Office – during this period. What was it like to be in the thick of it? How did the campaign work? What were the relationships between Ministers and officials like? How effective was the No campaign? How and why did the No campaign come so perilously close to losing the referendum?

Two points are worth stressing at the outset. First, presentationally the challenge to make positive virtue out of ‘No’ was not easy. We had to try to turn ‘No to independence’ into a positive case for the Union. That was not going to be easy – in particular after the phrase ‘Project Fear’ was first unfortunately used by someone from the No campaign and leaked to the Yes side. The phrase stuck and it gave the Yes campaign a stick with which to attack all aspects of the No campaign as being innately negative.

But second, and far more significantly, the Yes campaign was united in all ways. The No campaign at times only appeared united in its opposition to independence. On the Yes side there was a unity of purpose and strategy between the Scottish National Party, the Scottish Government and the Yes campaign. By contrast, the three main UK parties were politically disunited and only worked together on this one aspect; the Government was a coalition and had differing approaches to handling the referendum; and the Better Together campaign started slowly, and was far less organised than the Yes campaign. Better Together did, later in the campaign, get its act together under the steady leadership of Alistair Darling. But at the start of the referendum it appeared on the back foot, and indeed flat-footed.

The SNP leadership of the Yes campaign had strong support and high visibility in Scotland. By contrast many of the key UK politicians on the No side – as Conservative cabinet ministers – were unpopular in much of Scotland. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, and the Home Secretary, Teresa May, rarely ventured north of the border, and even the Prime Minister, David Cameron, only made occasional and targeted visits to Scotland. On the No side, of the Labour politicians, Alistair Darling was an effective campaigner, as was Gordon Brown – although he only entered the political fray late on. The Scottish Liberal Democrat ministers were also involved in the campaign, but were less high profile.

Public opinion was divided and, early in the campaign, the No side was clearly ahead in the polls by a ratio of some 2:1. This allowed us to play to our strength – the economic arguments. The Treasury led the Scotland Analysis Programme – or SAP – and, over the two years of the campaign, produced 15 SAP Documents covering all of the arguments about independence – from energy to welfare, from defence to science and research. The work was led by the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, Sir Nicholas Macpherson, who gave the programme leadership through chairing the Steering Group personally, and resources in terms of allocating Treasury officials to work on the documents. Later in the campaign Macpherson became a prominent figure himself (unusual for a civil servant) following his decision to make public the advice he gave the Chancellor, George

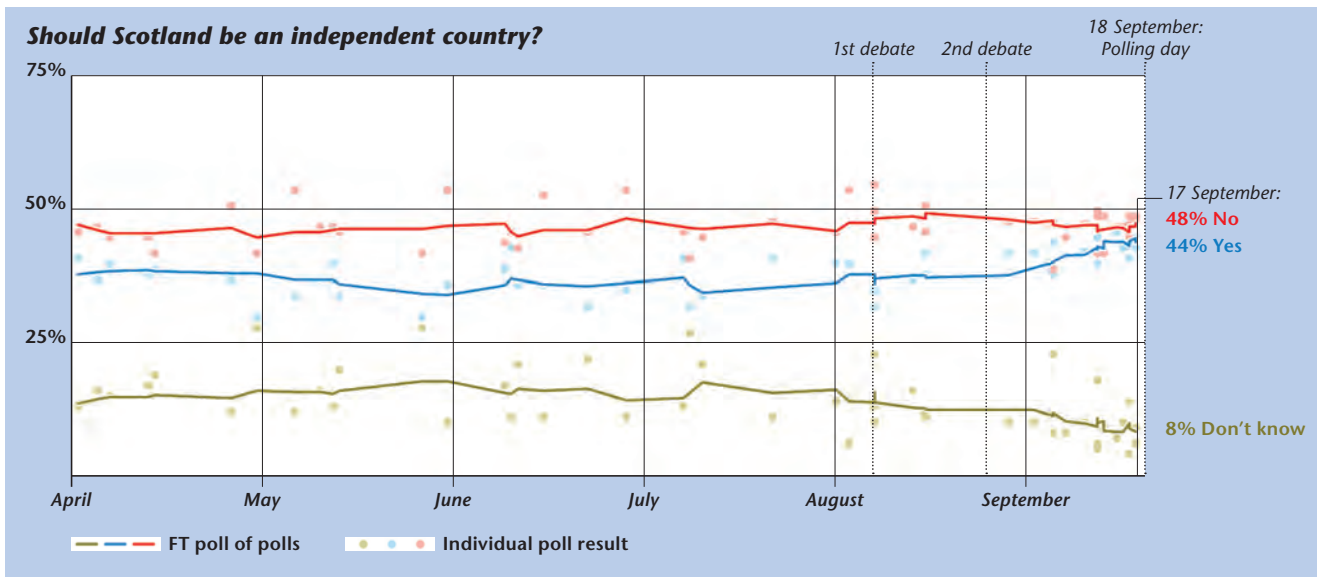


Figure 1
The *Financial Times*'s Scottish independence poll tracker

Osborne, opposing the Yes campaign's arguments for a sterling currency union with the UK in the event of independence.

I felt throughout the whole referendum period that the No campaign's economic arguments were stronger than those in the Yes campaign's 'White Paper' – predicated as it was on an oil price of around \$100 a barrel, as opposed to the price of closer to \$30 today.

However, whilst the Treasury gave a strong lead on economic messaging, the No campaign suffered from having no really strong ministerial or departmental lead. There were four key departments involved: the Scotland Office, the Cabinet Office, the Treasury, and No. 10. The Scotland Office was technically the lead department but, as a small department and led politically by the junior coalition partner, we were the least powerful department. Our advantage was that we knew Scotland and most of our staff were based there.

There were two different Secretaries of State for Scotland during the referendum campaign: Michael Moore and then Alistair Carmichael. Moore was low profile and cautious. He had negotiated the Edinburgh Agreement in 2012, but the following year he was sacked and replaced by Carmichael in order to try to give the No campaign a boost and a higher profile. It didn't really work and, eventually, the lead minister became, in effect, Danny Alexander, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who took on an overseeing role and a co-ordination function. In communications terms the Scotland Office matched the efforts of the Scottish Government well, despite being far outnumbered in terms of staff resources. In the last few months prior to referendum day, Alexander held a daily telephone conference on communications and this gave a better sense of purpose and focus to the UK Government's overall campaigning activities in Scotland.

But throughout 2014 the polls began to narrow and by early summer became alarmingly close (Figure 1). 'What Scotland Thinks?' – the polling website of Professor John

Curtice FBA of Strathclyde University – was required reading for both sides in the campaign.²

The final days

Throughout the summer of 2014, the Yes vote gradually made further ground and improved in the polls until the two camps were almost neck and neck. At the time Scotland appeared to be a sea of Yes posters – at least it did to me on a visit to the Western Isles and then Glasgow shortly before polling day. An opinion poll published in the *Sunday Times* on 7 September gave the Yes campaign a narrow lead for the first time.

The last days of the campaign were frenetic.

- On 9 September 2014, David Cameron cancelled Prime Minister's Question Time, so that the three main party leaders from Westminster could campaign in Scotland.
- On the weekend before the vote, the Queen in a conversation after church and, in reply to remarks from a well-wisher, commented that she hoped people would 'think very carefully about the future' before casting their vote.
- On Tuesday 16 September, the 'Vow' was published.
- On Wednesday 17 September – the eve of poll – President Obama tweeted: 'The UK is an extraordinary partner for America and a force for good in an unstable world. I hope it remains strong, robust and united.'

There was undoubtedly an air of panic.

And then, by Friday morning, 19 September the result was clear – a victory for No by 55 per cent to 45 per cent. At 7am that morning, the Prime Minister made a statement on the steps of Downing Street promising a quick commission and report (the Smith Commission) to introduce more devolution – and critically coupled it with

2. www.whatscotlandthinks.org

a statement in support of so-called EVEL, English Votes for English Laws. Was this a sign of continuing panic?

Alex Salmond stood down that day as SNP leader and was replaced by his deputy Nicola Sturgeon, who was later confirmed as his permanent successor.

The Yes camp had lost by 10 percentage points. But the momentum was with the losers. If the No campaign – and opponents of the SNP – thought that the referendum was to signal that the high-water mark had been reached, then they were, once again, mistaken. The SNP went from strength to strength. In 2015 they pulled off another show of massive strength when, at the May General Election, Scotland was painted yellow with 56 SNP MPs and a 50 per cent share of the popular vote in Scotland. Labour, the Conservatives and the Lib Dems each won one seat.

The SNP success story

So what, if anything, can the UK Government now do facing this SNP-led march of history? Is a second referendum on independence which results in a Yes vote the second time round inevitable?

And why has this happened? How was the SNP – in a period of less than 40 years – able to outflank the Conservatives, Labour and, for good measure, the Liberals, so as to position itself as the dominant political force in Scotland? The answer lies in three things: policies, politics and politicians. And perhaps also in a fourth element – passion.

Policies

The SNP's policy stance and strategy has evolved over time – but it has always been within the context of their clear and unswerving ultimate aim of Scottish independence – albeit something that has been described by some people as 'Indy lite' (in other words, that Scottish should be independent, but accept some limited shared aspects with the remainder of the United Kingdom – the monarchy, the currency and so on).

Back in the 1970s, the SNP policies portrayed the party as an alternative to the Tories. 'It's Scotland's oil' and a focus on the more affluent parts of North East Scotland helped to emphasise their appeal to the more Conservative parts of the electorate. Not for nothing did their opponents sometime dub them the 'tartan Tories'.

By contrast, in the 2014 referendum campaign, the policy agenda set out in their Independence White Paper – the SNP's manifesto for independence – neatly focused on childcare as its centrepiece, and used Nicola Sturgeon to spearhead the campaign in Glasgow where her brand of nationalism appealed more to women voters than did Alex Salmond's.

And in the 2015 General Election the SNP put forward a range of populist policies: anti-austerity; higher public spending; free university education; free prescriptions; free long-term care for the elderly; pro-Europe; and anti-Trident.

Politics

So, politically in 2015 the SNP were able to target the



Alun Evans, then Director of the Scotland Office, visiting an oil rig in the North Sea during the Scottish Referendum campaign.

Labour Party and its seats in the central belt of Scotland, and gave a more full-throated opposition to austerity than the Labour Party in Scotland was able to vocalise.

By opposing the Conservatives' austerity plans so strongly and with their popular policies placing them to the left of Labour, the SNP cleverly split Scottish Labour and placed them in a dilemma. Should Labour move left to try to compete with the SNP? Or should they try to take back the centre ground and squeeze the Liberals? As a result, Scottish Labour was completely outgunned. Having lost in 2007 and 2011 and with a seemingly ever changing leadership, the party looked to be drifting – relying on its belief that it would always win seats in its traditional areas.

Personalities

And, in turn, the SNP policies and politics were given strong and consistent leadership by a remarkable triumvirate of politicians who have run the party throughout all of the 21st century: Alex Salmond, Nicola Sturgeon, and the lower profile but very competent John Swinney – who temporarily led the party from 2000 to 2004. Between the three of them, they have become the faces of Scottish nationalism. They made their names – and their power base was and is – in Holyrood.

Contrast that with the following lists of some of the prominent Scottish Cabinet Ministers and politicians who chose to build their political careers in Westminster.

- For Labour: Gordon Brown, Robin Cook, Alistair Darling, Des Browne, John Reid, Helen Liddell, Jim Murphy.
- For the Conservatives: Malcolm Rifkind, George Younger, Michael Forsyth.
- And for the Liberal Democrats: Danny Alexander, Alistair Carmichael, Michael Moore, Menzies Campbell, Charlie Kennedy.

(Perhaps an early classic example was John Smith who, at age of 36 and before he went on to become Labour leader, was offered a Ministerial post by Harold Wilson

in February 1974 as Solicitor General for Scotland. He turned it down on the grounds that he did not want to get stuck in the backwater of Scottish politics.)

And now, for comparison, here is the complete list of prominent unionist politicians who chose to base themselves in Holyrood:

- Donald Dewar, and (in the twilight of his career) David Steel.

In short there remains a dearth of unionist politicians wishing to take on – or capable of taking on – the SNP. Kezia Dugdale, Scottish Labour’s leader, still faces an uphill struggle.

Passion

And passion. There are people who love the Union and feel it is the essence of their national characteristic. But it is sometimes far harder to state a passion in defence of the status quo and for a lack of change, as opposed to being passionate about something that is novel, exciting and into the unknown. That the SNP showed enormous passion – in presenting its case for independence – is undeniable.

Getting ahead of the curve

So what of the future? Is the inevitable outcome that the UK Government, of whatever party, will always be playing catch up with the SNP? Will the forthcoming EU referendum – depending on its outcome – be the catalyst for the SNP to argue the case for a second independence referendum sooner rather than later? And would the outcome for that referendum be a Yes vote – as suggested by some recent opinion polls? I don’t know, but I don’t think it has to be that way.

I do know – and here I should stress that I am speaking personally and not on behalf of the British Academy – that, for unionist politicians and those who believe in the future of the United Kingdom, doing nothing is not an option.

The time for incrementalism is over. Playing catch up with the SNP has not worked and probably will not work. The time is ripe now to get ahead of the curve and so help to secure the Union. I would argue that the time has come for the United Kingdom to make a big, bold, and generous offer to the people of Scotland.

That offer needs to be – whatever people choose to call it – full fiscal autonomy, Devo Max plus or, in the language of Gladstone, Home Rule for Scotland within the United Kingdom. This echoes the words of Charles Stuart Parnell and the Irish nationalism of the late 1880s. Parnell, I believe, is one of Alex Salmond’s political heroes.

What would that look like? In summary:

- Full devolution of tax and spend to the Scottish Parliament and Government, except for reserved areas
- Full responsibility for domestic policy and spending
- Full responsibility for energy policy and activity on and off shore

- Agreement on certain shared responsibilities within the United Kingdom
- All to be set within the framework of the continuance of the United Kingdom as a constitutional monarchy
- A shared economic area with monetary policy set by the UK central bank’s monetary policy committee on which Scotland’s views should be represented
- Defence and the overall conduct of foreign policy to be run by the United Kingdom but with full consultation on key areas of interest to Scotland

And such an arrangement would need to come within the context of three conditions.

First, *the economic condition*. This arrangement would, by definition, spell the end of the Barnett formula as it applies to Scotland.³ There would need to be a new and more modern formula to apply to Wales and Northern Ireland. And Scotland would make a payment to the UK Government for UK-wide service and provision (just as the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands do now).

Second, *the political condition*. And here I come to what I believe is the best answer to ‘the West Lothian Question’.⁴ Giving a far greater degree of independence within the United Kingdom to Scotland – Home Rule – does have a quid pro quo in terms of reduced political power for Scotland within the United Kingdom parliament at Westminster. And so while there is no answer to the West Lothian Question in its absolute purest sense – short of a full English Parliament, and I do not believe that electing hundreds more politicians to be the solution – in my view the best, and fairest, answer to the Question is to reduce the number of Scottish MPs in return for Home Rule. That would imply a cut of perhaps 50 per cent in the number of Scottish MPs, all with commensurately larger constituencies. An independent Commission similar to the Boundary Commission could be charged with overseeing that task. And, for what it is worth, that was precisely the approach used in the United Kingdom for Northern Ireland from 1923 to 1972. So there is a tried and tested precedent for this.

Third, *the constitutional condition*. This issue has to be put to bed for a generation, not for a year or for five years. Perhaps there is here something here we can learn from

3. The Barnett formula is a funding formula for distributing funds within the United Kingdom. It was introduced in the late 1970s by the Callaghan Government. It was named after Joel Barnett, the then Chief Secretary to the Treasury, and applies to spending in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It was based on a population formula, and intended to ensure that spending per head in Scotland and England converged over time. But this has not happened, as Scotland’s population has declined in size relative to England’s.

4. The West Lothian Question is the short-hand term for the issue of whether MPs from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales who sit in the House of Commons of the United Kingdom should be able to vote on matters that affect only England, while MPs from England are unable to vote on matters that have been devolved. The phrase was attributed to the Labour MP Tam Dalyell, but was in fact first used by the Ulster Unionist and former Conservative MP Enoch Powell. Dalyell, the MP for the West Lothian constituency, asked during the passage of the Scotland Bill in November 1977: ‘For how long will English constituencies and English Honourable Members tolerate ... at least 119 Honourable Members from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland exercising an important, and probably often decisive, effect on English politics while they themselves have no say in the same matters in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?’ Later in the debate, Enoch Powell commented: ‘We have finally grasped what the Honourable Member for West Lothian is getting at. Let us call it the West Lothian question.’

the history of Canada and the Quebec experience after their second referendum in 1995 – when the separatist movement failed to gain Quebec independence by only 1 per cent. Following that referendum victory the federal Government of Canada reached out to Quebec, in a spirit of generosity, and sold the benefits of remaining within Canada much more strongly and passionately. Those in the United Kingdom who believe in Scotland remaining a part of the United Kingdom now need to do the same to ensure that agreement on Home Rule is not immediately unpicked. And an agreement to Home Rule must stipulate that it is for the long term.

I end with the wise words of Lord Hennessy FBA. In his book *The Kingdom to Come*,⁵ Peter concluded that

5. Peter Hennessy, *The Kingdom to Come: Thoughts on the Union before and after the Scottish Referendum* (2015).

we need to identify and celebrate the issues that help us think and behave as a Union:

- the Queen; the Armed Forces; the welfare state; the National Health Service; economic stability; the BBC; the UK passport; the Olympic Games.

We need more of these, many more. And we need to celebrate all the benefits that a strong proud country such as Scotland can get through Home Rule within the wider United Kingdom. Those in the United Kingdom who believe in Scotland remaining a part of the United Kingdom will also need to do all they can to ensure that any agreement on Home Rule is sustainable. A long-term agreement to Home Rule must stipulate that it is just that – for the long term – even if that needs to be enshrined in a new Treaty of Union.

Constitutional change: policy work by the British Academy

In the run-up to the referendum on Scottish independence, the British Academy worked closely with the Royal Society of Edinburgh on a series of events, culminating in the publication *Enlightening the Constitutional Debate*. This programme shed light on the implications of independence for a range of areas of public life, from taxation to culture and broadcasting.

Following the referendum, discussions on devolution are ongoing, and the British Academy continues to feed into the debate and analysis. A new project is currently being explored, to look at constitutional change from the point of view of England – examining the place of England in the context of a changing UK.

Key issues to be examined include the concept of an English identity and whether there is a unitary identity across England. What are the natural regions

of England, and are we moving to the (re)creation of English regions? What are the relationships between devolution deals and the roles of elected mayors?

Questions relating to the representation of English voices include the impact of the introduction of English Votes for English Laws (EVEL), and the question of whether EVEL leads inevitably to the establishment of an English Parliament. The future of the political parties also comes into the debate – will we see the emergence of English parties? What does this mean for the party-political landscape in the UK?

These issues are being further developed by the British Academy's Public Policy Committee and Team, and will be addressed through a series of public and private events, publications and other media over the next 18 months.

British Academy events

The British Academy organises a range of events open to all, which offer the chance explore new research that sheds light on a wide range of human and social issues. Further information about past and future events may be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/events/



Faith

In early 2016, the British Academy is holding a season of events on the subject of 'Faith'. On 21 January, Professor Linda Woodhead (pictured) gave a lecture that investigated 'Why "no religion" is the new religion'; and on 28 January a British Academy Debate asked 'Who cares if Britain isn't a Christian country?'

On 2 February, Professor Tanja Scheer provided a different historical perspective on religious custom with her lecture on 'Religion and the senses in Ancient Greek culture.'

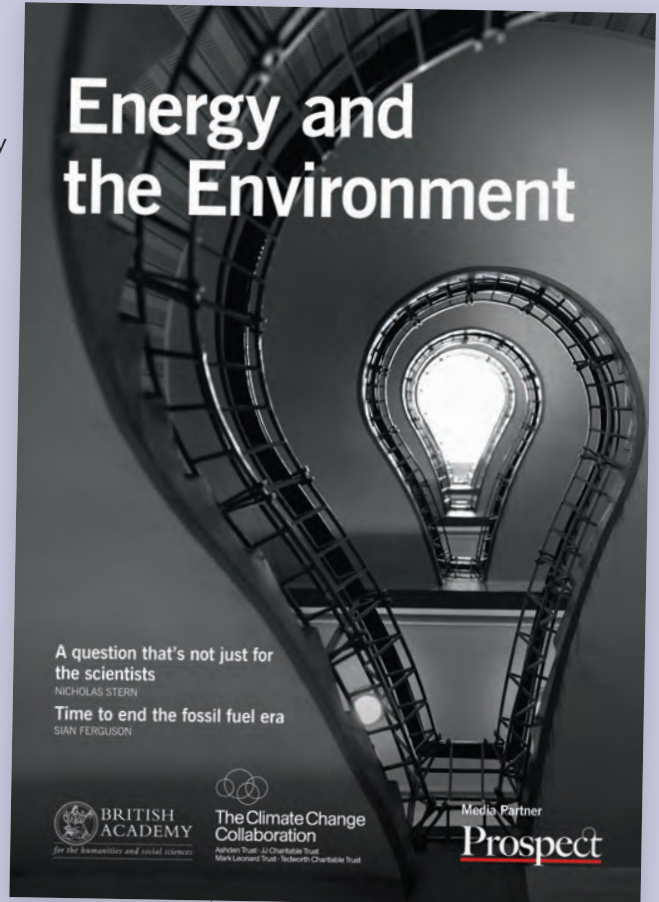
Recordings of these events, plus further information about the rest of the 'Faith' season, can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/faith/

Energy and the environment

The 'British Academy Debates' seek to show how insights from humanities and social sciences research can help us understand the major challenges we face as societies, as economies and as individuals – contributing to our national conversation of these issues. In autumn 2015, the subject of the British Academy Debates was 'Energy and the Environment'. In a booklet produced to summarise the discussions, Lord Nicholas Stern, the President of the British Academy, writes:

'For this, our fourth series of debates, the Academy focused on one of the world's most complex and divisive issues: energy and the environment. Held in the run-up to the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris (COP21) in late 2015, our purpose was to explore the momentous changes in the way we generate and use energy. Across the world, there is growing concern over the impact of energy systems on human health and the environment. There is now an urgent need for discussions about how we can increase standards of living and tackle poverty, at a time when there is strong growth in the world economy, an increasing population and intense urbanisation.

'Globally, there is an increasing awareness of the risks posed by fossil fuels, and particularly of their contribution to climate change and



local air pollution. There is also a need for a rapid transition to alternative sources of energy. But concerns about managing radical change, including who might win or lose from such a shift, and the practical challenges of abandoning the traditional consumption of oil, coal and gas, have made energy one of the most contentious areas of public policy in many countries.

'For this reason, the British Academy teamed up with the Royal Society, with support from the Climate Change Collaboration and *Prospect*, to allow audiences in England, Wales and Scotland to listen to experts' views and have their say about one of the most important issues facing our generation.'

To download the booklet or to watch video recordings of the debates, go to www.britishacademy.ac.uk/energy/

Creating heritage

Vikings, Jorvik and public interest archaeology

PETER ADDYMAN

Dr Peter V. Addyman was the Director of York Archaeological Trust from its foundation in 1972 to 2002, and instigator of the Jorvik Viking Centre. In 2015 he was awarded a British Academy President's Medal in recognition of his significant efforts in making archaeology and historic heritage publicly accessible. Here he reviews the role of urban archaeology in York in stimulating the growth of a new heritage industry.¹

Archaeological excavation as a method of establishing the origins and development of British towns and cities is very much a growth of the last 50 years. Nowadays, prior excavation is almost mandatory when modern re-development schemes threaten to destroy or disturb buried archaeological remains in and around urban centres, but it was not always so. Despite massive post-war re-development in many town centres, prior excavation and recording was then the exception not the rule. When it took place at all – excavation of the Temple of Mithras at Walbrook in London is a famous example – it was usually directed to the study of the Roman past. By contrast post-war reconstruction in continental towns, especially in Germany, had been seen as an opportunity for a more comprehensive approach, demonstrating, in a number of astonishingly productive excavations, the power of archaeology to write a new kind of urban history. Belatedly, therefore, the Council for British Archaeology, then largely financed through the British Academy, set up an Urban Research Committee in 1969 under the chairmanship of Professor Maurice Barley FBA, which identified towns and cities in Britain with archaeological potential, period by period, and began to evaluate the threats posed to them by modern development. Meanwhile comprehensive excavations in certain towns, notably those carried out in the 1960s by Professor Martin Biddle FBA at Winchester, demonstrated the power of new techniques of open-area stratigraphic excavation to address major problems of urban origins, development, topography, land use and culture.

1. This article is based on the first Raymond and Beverly Sackler Distinguished Lecture in Archaeology (given in honour of Professor Norman Hammond FBA), delivered by Dr Peter Addyman at Cambridge on 4 November 2015.



Dr Peter Addyman – pictured here (right), together with Lord Stern, the President of the British Academy – received his British Academy President's Medal in a ceremony held at the Academy on 29 September 2015. A full list of the Prizes and Medals awarded by the British Academy can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/2015prizes/

York Archaeological Trust

By 1970, the nation had become aware, through the strident campaigns of Rescue, the Trust for British Archaeology, of the general threats to Britain's archaeological heritage from development. At this juncture, major schemes for an inner and outer ring road were proposed for York, arguably the most important ancient town in the North of England, together with four major development schemes, five multi-storey car parks and various ancillary developments all within the city walls (Figure 1). This seemed to threaten catastrophic destruction of York's archaeology at just the moment when the potential of archaeological research in towns was becoming apparent to scholars. A comprehensive campaign of excavations seemed to be demanded, and in 1972 the York Archaeological Trust was founded, as



Figure 1
York: the Jorvik excavation preceded the construction of the red-roofed buildings right centre. Photo: English Heritage

an independent charity, to carry it out. Barley was the chairman of the new Trust, and I left my lectureship in the University of Southampton to become its director, assemble funds, premises, a staff and resources, and set out a coherent programme of research. In persuading York city authorities to countenance such a campaign, the Trust promised a vastly enhanced understanding of the history of the city, greatly-enriched archaeological collections in its museums and considerable educational, recreational and tourism benefits. Forty-three years on, it has comprehensively delivered all those things, and in addition developed a heritage industry that has changed the character of York and significantly benefited its economy.

York's significance in the past is well known. It was founded in or about AD 71 as *Eboracum*, a legionary fortress first for the Roman IXth legion and later for the VIth legion. By the early 3rd century it was also a civil town with the status of *colonia*, and it had become capital of the province of Lower Britain. By the early 4th century it saw the proclamation of Constantine as emperor on the death of his father Constantius; apparently it already had a bishop; and later it may have been the seat of the *Dux Britanniarum*, the functionary charged with the defence of all the provinces of Britain. By 627 it had received the mission of Paulinus that re-established the church in Northumbria, and by the 8th century it was *Eoforwic*, a metropolitan city, focus for the church in the North, and centre of culture and trade for Northumbria. Captured by a Viking army in 867-8, it became *Jorvik*, a Viking capital city for much of the late 9th and part of the 10th century. With the establishment of two castles at the Norman conquest, it gained strategic importance, developed in the 12th and 13th centuries to become the second largest city in England, and even after late medieval population decline remained pre-eminent in the North. Buried archaeological deposits pertaining to all these periods are well preserved in York, which had hitherto largely avoided disruptive modern development, and the deposits, because of York's water-retaining clay substrate, often generate anaerobic conditions that lead to exceptional preservation of organic material, metals



Figure 2
Coppergate, York. Visitors view the 'Viking Dig'. Photos in Figures 2–8: courtesy York Archaeological Trust.

and a wide range of artefacts that normally perish.

In 1972, therefore, the archaeological potential of York seemed great. But to realise it, funds were needed, and access to development sites had to be gained. The solution to both challenges seemed to be in education. The Trust's charitable remit was to educate the public in archaeology. Archaeological research was not itself a charitable activity at law, but education was, and it was argued that to educate people about York's archaeology it was first necessary to establish the story – by research. For that, the charity could therefore seek and receive resources. Access to sites was not mandatory in the 1970s, but had to be achieved by persuasion. Here a hearts-and-minds campaign was necessary, to persuade city authorities of the value and importance of archaeology, to persuade developers of the wisdom and indeed public duty of allowing access to their sites prior to development, and to persuade a doubtful and dour northern public that archaeology before development was not an expensive, time-wasting and disruptive irrelevance, but an exciting and important opportunity to discover York's history, avoid its loss, and pass evidence for it on to posterity.

From the very first, therefore, arrangements were made on city-centre excavations for the public to be allowed access while the work was in progress, the first step in educating people in archaeology (Figure 2). Visitors were given visual and audio interpretations, explanations by voluntary guides, leaflets and, where possible, fuller publications. Schools around the city were encouraged to send classes to visit under the care of the Trust's schools officer, or if not, to allow her to present the story in schools. City councillors and officers were given on-site briefings on the significance of what was being revealed, of its potential for enriching city history and collections, and for tourism. Happily some of the earliest excavations produced important discoveries that could become the subject of press and television reports and soon the York Trust developed a strong media presence. This included several visits from the influential children's BBC television programme *Blue Peter*, memorably once with one of its presenters clambering along a deeply-buried, but still excrement-rich, Roman sewer.



Figure 3
The 'Viking Dig' at Coppergate, York.

Excavations

Early excavations by the York Archaeological Trust included work on the defences of the Roman legionary fortress, the excavation of the college of the Vicars Choral of York Minster and the saving of its medieval common hall, still miraculously standing in the heart of later industrial development. The excavation of long-demolished churches added an excavated component to knowledge of a type of building previously only known from documentary or architectural evidence. Demographic data was obtained from the excavation of cemeteries threatened by development, including medieval parish cemeteries, a monastic cemetery, a Jewish medieval cemetery and various Roman burial grounds, adding a new dimension to York's history. This study of urban demographic history through archaeology eventually led, through the Trust's cooperation with the School of Archaeology at the University of Bradford, to the development there of new disciplines of palaeopathology and forensic archaeology. The anaerobic ground conditions in York were found to preserve macroscopic and microscopic botanical remains and insect fauna, stimulating the establishment of an environmental archaeology unit in the University of York to develop the discipline of palaeoecology and establish



Figure 4
Coppergate, York: a well-preserved 10th century timber building.

urban environmental conditions in the past. Some 1500 excavations eventually took place in York between 1972 and 2002, providing new data on most periods of York's past. The York Archaeological Trust firmly believed the dictum of a former Secretary of the British Academy, Sir Mortimer Wheeler FBA, that the date of a discovery is the date of its publication, and has so far produced over 70 volumes – and much further digital material – detailing its discoveries. New data on long-lost York buildings and topographical features have also enriched the content of the York volume of the *British Historic Towns Atlas*, jointly produced recently with the British Historic Towns Trust.²

Most of the York Trust's excavations were development-led, occasioned by threats of destruction by new construction schemes. Even amongst these, however, there had to be choices, and a review of priorities for future archaeological research was suggested by the then Ancient Monuments Inspectorate of the Department of the Environment. This identified as a particular priority the excavation of a part of the commercial centre of the 9th-11th century town, Viking age Jorvik (Figure 3). At the time there was simply no evidence from England as to what such a place looked like. Fortunately a development site became available in Coppergate, in the heart of the area where waterlogged conditions – and thus excellent preservation – was known to prevail. Exploratory excavations at Coppergate began in 1976. These immediately revealed, just below the cellar floors of recently demolished buildings, well-preserved timber buildings of the Viking Age, some still standing two metres high (Figure 4). The associated artefacts were prolific, rich and, because of the anaerobic conditions, superbly well preserved. The site therefore presented an exceptional opportunity and exceptional measures were needed to raise the funds to pay for a large excavation – and the deep steel shuttering needed to make it safe.

Magnus Magnusson, then a familiar and much loved face as question master of the BBC programme *Mastermind*, agreed to chair a Special Development Campaign that had as its patrons the Prince of Wales, Queen Margrethe of Denmark (both themselves archaeology

2. Peter Addyman (ed.), *British Historic Towns Atlas*, Volume V, York (2015).

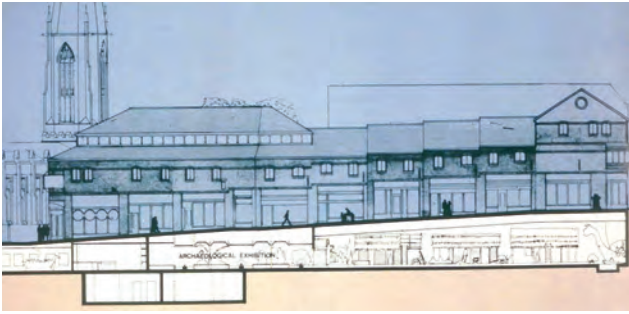


Figure 5
The Jorvik Viking Centre: modern shops above, Viking age street below.

graduates from Cambridge), the King of Sweden, the Crown Prince of Norway, and the President of Iceland. Funds arrived from Britain, from all parts of Scandinavia, and from Scandinavian expatriates in the United States. This enabled the excavation to continue for over five years. New discoveries, which poured out of the ground continuously, were used to generate local, national and international publicity. The site, in Trust tradition, was open to the public and, heavily promoted, often generated long queues and an eventual attendance of well over half a million people, who themselves contributed handsomely to the work through their entrance fees and purchases. Meanwhile the nation and the world took a new interest in the Viking phenomenon, as press cuttings from Britain, the Continent, America, the Antipodes, and of course especially Scandinavia itself, clearly showed, and Jorvik at York became an international tourist destination.

The Jorvik Viking Centre

In the face of development, even important and prolific excavations have to come to an end, and construction of a new shopping centre and multi-storey car park loomed in the early 1980s. Ian Skipper, an entrepreneur supporter of the York Archaeological Trust, who had done much to invigorate and inspire Magnusson's fundraising campaign, was incensed that so important a site would have to go, and insisted that the Trust should find some way of 'saving' it.

To cut a very long story very short, a scheme was devised to create a huge underground gallery below the new Coppergate Centre in which Jorvik's remarkable timber buildings, having in the meantime been through a long laboratory conservation process, could be re-assembled where they had been found (Figure 5). To aid comprehension of these remains, which the public often found difficult to understand, a reconstruction of the whole neighbourhood, as it might have been in the Viking age, was to be made, based in every detail on data from the excavation (Figure 6). Large numbers of visitors were hoped for. To provide security and give an optimal experience, people were to visit seated in comfortable time cars (Figure 7). These would regress through a millennium to the Viking Age, then move forward through Jorvik. Their occupants would experience Jorvik as does a new visitor to any foreign place (the past is,



Figure 6
The 1984 version of Jorvik.



Figure 7
Jorvik Viking Centre: visiting Jorvik in a Time Car.

after all, a foreign country), seeing the sights, smelling the smells, feeling the breezes and hearing the sounds, with Magnus Magnusson's familiar and seductive tones quietly drawing attention to particularly interesting details. Having seen the interpretation, visitors then needed to see the evidence, so the time cars were to move forward in time again, to the 1970s, and into the Viking dig, to see the ancient buildings – the actual remains – in the state the excavators found them. Time travel over, visitors could then examine the huge number of artefacts found at Coppergate, theme by theme, in more conventional museum displays.

The Jorvik Viking Centre opened in April 1984, welcomed 4,800 people on its first day, over 900,000 in its first year, and by 2015 had indelibly imprinted the York Archaeological Trust's view of life in Viking age Coppergate in the minds of over 18 million visitors. Finding winter a relatively slack period for visitors the York Archaeological Trust instituted an annual Jorvik Viking Festival in February, an extravaganza of academic lectures, cultural events, re-enactments, Viking boat regattas, simulated battles and a boat burning. Now in its 30th year, it is credited with attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors to York at a formerly quiet period. In the year Jorvik opened, the government introduced a new national educational curriculum in which for



Figure 8
Jorvik Viking Centre: the perennial queue.

the first time the Viking phenomenon was included, specifying the Jorvik Viking Centre as the one relevant place to visit. As a result, and to avoid hopeless congestion, Jorvik had at popular visiting seasons to restrict school visits to one every 14 minutes (Figure 8). York, moreover, acquired another tourist visitor component.

With problems like this, and queues that could reach two hours in duration, evidently the Jorvik Viking Centre was too small. Equally, if it was to fulfil its educational role properly, it clearly lacked dedicated teaching areas for children. The Trust rapidly addressed the latter problem by developing an Archaeological Resource Centre (an 'ARC'), in a nearby redundant medieval church, where children could study the processes of archaeological research through hands-on experience of real archaeological material, sorting and classifying artefacts, examining trays full of real organic remains of Viking, or Roman, or medieval date, sorting them into different categories – bones, seeds, charcoal, insect remains and so on, then working out what each category tells us about the past. The ARC, now re-designed and re-named DIG, has over the years provided over one million children with another unforgettable introduction to archaeology, working on the Confucian principle that if you hear you forget, if you see you remember, but if you do you understand.

The Jorvik Viking Centre, ARC/DIG and several other heritage-related attractions in York now administered by the York Archaeological Trust, together with the Trust's primary work of archaeology, have between them provided a firm financial foundation for the organisation over the 30 years since Jorvik opened, the Trust's annual turnover now exceeding £6.5 million. These resources, and the institutions that produce them, enable it effectively to satisfy its charitable remit of educating the public in archaeology while at the same time providing, without any public grants, the first rate archaeological service that a city like York needs. More generally, however, York has benefited from the Jorvik Viking Centre's stimulus to heritage-based tourism in

York. Recently-published figures show that tourist numbers in York have increased from c.1 million in 1970 to c.7 million in 2014. The city had 560 hotel and guest house rooms in 1970; it now boasts over 7,000. In 1970 tourism spend in York was £60,000,000; by 2014 it was c.£600,000,000. In 1971 confectionary manufacture and rolling stock construction employed c.20,000 people and tourism c.2,500; by 2014 confectionary and rail construction had shrunk to c.5,000, while tourism jobs had jumped to 20,000. It would be presumptuous to suggest that these changes are a direct result of the advent of Jorvik and the work of the York Archaeological Trust. In this period York has, for example, also gained the National Railway Museum and an extremely efficient visitor promotion organisation has marketed the city vigorously: but the Trust's contribution has not been negligible.

Continuum

Much of the credit for the creation of the Jorvik Viking Centre, and the heritage industry which has grown from it, must go to the foresight, drive and energy of Ian Skipper and the skills of the Centre's project manager Colonel Anthony Gaynor. As the success of Jorvik became apparent, Skipper invited the York Archaeological Trust to deploy its new-found expertise in heritage interpretation and public presentation elsewhere. The Trust, dedicated to working in its York home, felt it could not do this, though aware that it was receiving local, national and indeed global requests for advice on the Jorvik style of presentation, and was hosting a stream of fact-finding distinguished professionals from cultural institutions and visitor attractions around the world. Skipper therefore established his own company, Heritage Projects Ltd, later re-named Continuum, which, with Colonel Gaynor initially as its Chief Executive, began to develop its own heritage-based attractions in various centres around Britain, including Canterbury, Oxford and Edinburgh, and to provide a consultancy, design and construction service to those who wished to develop a Jorvik-style approach to the presentation and interpretation of their own heritage assets. Continuum, now a leader in its field, runs numerous heritage attractions, including such 21st century cultural phenomena as the original set for Granada Television's *Coronation Street*, attracting huge numbers, pending its forthcoming demolition. The construction and design side of the operation is now a separate York-based company *Paragon Creative* with a world-wide client list and countless highly successful heritage-based attractions to its credit. Meanwhile, for better or for worse (the maintenance of academic integrity is a constant worry), the powerful methods of interpretation and subliminal persuasion developed for Jorvik are discernible throughout the burgeoning world-wide heritage industry.

The vivid faces of Ireland's revolutionary generation

ROY FOSTER

in conversation with Richard English

In 2015 Professor Roy Foster FBA, Carroll Professor of Irish History at the University of Oxford, received a British Academy Medal for his book *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890–1923*.

The day after the British Academy's Prizes and Medals Ceremony in September 2015, Professor Foster was interviewed for the *British Academy Review* by Professor Richard English FBA, Wardlaw Professor of Politics at the University of St Andrews, to discuss the hopes and expectations of Ireland's revolutionary generation – as we approach the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising.

You have a Yeats-ian title to your book about the revolutionary generation in Ireland. How much was W.B. Yeats a presence for you as you wrote this book on Ireland in the late 19th and early 20th centuries?

George Moore said, 'Everything begins in Yeats and everything ends in Yeats', and that has been horribly true. I began working on the authorised biography of Yeats in 1986, spending 18 years on it.¹ In writing that biography, I read not just letters to and from Yeats, but letters of his friends to each other, because they so often wrote about him. In immersing myself in the correspondence of that couple of generations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, I was more and more struck by a sense that opinions were changing under the surface. People start signing their names in Irish; people start writing much more disrespectfully about the previous generation; scepticism about the Home Rule enterprise creeps in, sometimes along with worry about where the current of 'advanced nationalist' feeling is going to take things.

In Yeats's great poem from which the book's title is taken –

I have met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces
From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth-century houses.

1. R.F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: A Life* (Oxford University Press, Volume 1 1997, Volume 2, 2003).



Professor Roy Foster FBA – pictured here (right), together with Lord Stern, the President of the British Academy – received his British Academy Medal in a ceremony held at the Academy on 29 September 2015. According to the citation, Professor Foster 'enters uncharted territory with a highly original analysis of the "generation" and its formation which made the 1916 Easter Rebellion in Ireland. *Vivid Faces* unfolds in beautiful prose and scintillating erudition.' A full list of the Prizes and Medals awarded by the British Academy can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/2015prizes/

– he is biographising the revolutionary generation. As I wrote about Yeats, the thought at the back of my mind was the change of Irish hearts and minds against which his work and his life are patterned. And I thought, once I had finally finished with him, how interesting it would be to turn to the generation who supplanted Yeats's generation and by whom all was 'changed utterly', as he put it in the poem.

An aspect of *Vivid Faces* that ties in with one of the profound themes in your earlier scholarship is the idea of uncovering the unanticipated futures, or the futures people anticipate which then don't come to fruition. There is a lot in the



Figure 1
Muriel MacSwiney in the USA, 1922. Photo: private collection.

correspondence from this period about people expecting certain kinds of revolution which don't turn out to be the case: sexual revolution, social revolution, etc.

That is a key theme. One of the things Yeats wrote in a letter shortly after the Easter Rising was, 'We can no longer be certain about anything to do with the future, except that it must be very unlike the past.' In people's diaries and letters and especially through contemporary reflections, a lot of their thought was predicated upon a future that was going to be different from the past. They had a sometimes surprisingly radical – sometimes surprisingly secular – idea of the future. It would be a liberation from forms of authority beyond just the authority of the British Government: liberation from patriarchy, received gender roles and all sorts of things that seem to us very of the moment. For that interestingly radical generation in the Edwardian period, in Britain, France and Germany it was a time of questioning received verities, and that was happening in Ireland as well.

And freedom from parents, for some of them?

Yes. For many of the people whom I profile in this book, the authority that they sought to separate themselves from was the authority of the home, of the parents. You get these wonderful quotes, especially from the women. 'I have been brought up as a prisoner, an internal prisoner of my own family', is what Alice Milligan says. Muriel MacSwiney (Figure 1) says, 'I am only typical of many who are brought up shut up at home.' In this and in other ways they kept reminding me of the 1960s and a youth generation determined to remake the world.

Many of the advanced-nationalist women whose records I was exploring saw themselves as feminists and wanted to create a very different kind of world than the patriarchal, very Catholic world which more conventional revolutionary nationalists wanted. Again,

the language is surprisingly modern, and the sense of frustration and of being stifled is modern. The last part of the book, called 'Remembering', deals with revolutionary disillusionment, and this is an important part of this disillusionment of those women. Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and Rosamond Jacob, who live on into the early 1960s, are very conscious that from the 1920s onwards they are living a life that was not the life they thought they had agitated for – and in some cases had fought for.

Would it be fair to say that your own analysis challenges any sense of the inevitable – that the early 20th century would inevitably descend into revolution, or indeed more recently that the 1960s would inevitably descend into conflict in the Northern Ireland Troubles? Is there a contingency, rather than an inevitability, in both periods? Or is the tide so likely to go in one direction that we are watching the working-out of something that is predictable?

I hate predetermined history. I am a 1960s person myself, which is one reason why the parallels keep occurring to me. But one thing I have learned, in common with many of my contemporaries, is that the new world we expected in the 1960s did not happen, and that the governing forces in the world that we expected to decline – religion and nationalism – have not mutated into harmless forgotten lifeforms. They have come roaring back, red in tooth and claw, to construct the extremely uncertain world we live in today. If we had been told back in the 1960s that religion and nationalism were going to be what governed world affairs in the early 21st century, we would not have believed it. But it is, alas, true.

As I say, I am very uncomfortable with predetermined history. One reason why I admired the work of Eric Hobsbawm very much was that, though he adhered to a Marxist framework for understanding the past, he didn't make the mistake in his historical work of taking a predictive or overly predetermined approach to the future. He always built in the power of contingency and the power of irrationality, both of which I think are themes that pulse through the Irish Revolution, at least as I have analysed it.²

One of the reasons why Hobsbawm's historical work remains so commandingly important, even for people who would not have shared his politics at all, was exactly that intellectual self-discipline that he showed in being the historian primarily and the Marxist secondarily.

In your own case, as somebody who grew up in the Ireland that had been formed by the generation you are describing, has it been a difficult thing to disentangle Roy Foster who has an emotional engagement with that legacy from Roy Foster the historian who is digging through the archive material and producing a dispassionate and

2. Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1976. An extract from the newly published Biographical Memoir of Eric Hobsbawm, by Sir Richard J. Evans FBA, is published in this issue of the *British Academy Review*.

distanced account?

It is very hard for oneself to stand back and say that the persona that goes into the archives and then comes out and writes a book is different from the persona that has been embedded in Irish life – sometimes in Irish controversies – since adulthood. I don't think there is any such thing as a purely impartial historian, because I think what we bring to the table is the colouration and configuration of all sorts of things in our past. In my case, it would have to include being educated in a radically progressive Quaker environment. My family were not themselves Quakers – they were Church of Ireland – but both my parents taught at a coeducational Quaker boarding school, which was the background of my whole youthful life. The older I get, the more I realise how much that conditioned my approach to Irish history and to Irish identity, which has always been a theme in what I have written.

The influence of the 1960s, of that moment when 'to be young was very heaven', is also there.

But so also, I think, is my transmutation into a British historian. When I came to teach at Birkbeck College in 1974, I decided that, since I had a job teaching British history, I had better write British history. I got interested in Victorian high politics and culture, about which I wrote during the 1980s – before returning to Irish history in the 1990s. The baggage I bring from that period, especially from teaching Victorian Studies with my friends the literary scholars Andrew Sanders and Michael Slater in Birkbeck, was a very strong infusion of the importance of literary sources and literary consciousness in understanding the minds of a generation, and that certainly has played very directly into the way I approached *Vivid Faces*.

It seems to me that, when you write about the people in your book – though I suspect you would not have instinctive sympathy with the politics of many of them – you present them with dignity, understand them with empathy, and have looked at the network of their associations and motivations more closely than anybody else has before. There is a recreation here that is respectful of worlds of which you would not necessarily approve, but which as a historian you think need to be recreated in a full and empathetic approach.

I think empathy is vital. But I don't think it is our business to approve or disapprove of the political choices made by people in an era a century before. Of course, there is a certain extent to which that is nonsense. If you are writing the life of one of the worst possible Nazis imaginable, Reinhard Heydrich, you have to approach him with what his biographer, Robert Gerwarth, describes as 'cold empathy' – but still empathy. You have to try to understand why people think the way they do.

The empathy I approach these people with is much warmer than that, because I respected their idealism so much. And while I imagine, if I had been in their place, I would have retained faith with Home Rule for much longer than they did, one can see the idiotic, often pusillanimous and insensitive approaches of the British Government towards the ripening crisis in Ireland from

1910 as so infuriating that, at the time, you would have been very tempted to be pressed towards the simpler, more Manichean dualities of the Sinn Féin and then the Republican approach to an Irish future.

Unfortunately, that Manichean duality tended to exclude, I think, the complex realities of other Irish identities: the Irish Protestant and the Irish Unionist identities. Actually, some advanced nationalists were very acutely attuned to these, but they tended to be the kind of people who believed, as I was saying earlier, that the future would be secular. The anticlericalism of some of, if I can call them this, *my* Nationalists – Patrick McCartan, P.S. O'Hegarty, people from Quaker backgrounds like Bulmer Hobson (Figure 2) and Rosamund Jacob (Figure 3) – is I think very striking and, to me, very sympathetic.

One of the patterns that emerged when I was writing the book, and which only struck me very much towards the end, was that – if I can borrow a phrase from Régis Debray in the 1960s – there was a 'revolution within the revolution'. As things turned to fighting in 1919, the hard men with the guns were from a very different background to a lot of the people who had made, if you like, the revolutionary consciousness. They were more 'Faith and Fatherland'. They were more rural. They were more ruthless.

The more intellectually-oriented revolutionary agitators whom I had been dealing with, and into whose minds and hearts I had been trying to get, very often were surprised when these people emerged as pulling the triggers and then pulling the levers of the revolution. 'Who are they? Where have they come from? We have never met these guys. They have not been coming to the salons that we have been frequenting.' This struck me very forcibly. I think that is something which is new in the book: that there is a shift between one kind of revolutionary and another, and that it happens when the shooting starts.

That does come through to the reader very strongly. I think it is one of the explanations for the disjunction between so many of the expectations of the people whose networks you describe here and the Ireland that emerges in the 1920s and '30s. Violence does tend to set the pace and accelerate the agenda. It also polarises in ways that make it more difficult to have complexity, and it leaves legacies of bitterness and enmity that are difficult to unpick.

One interesting thing that comes out very strongly from your book is the mutual deafness between Nationalism and Unionism at moments that really matter. You find this during the First World War, a cataclysm which changes Irish history as so much else. There are these passions that shout past each other. When you look at the sources for these people who are mostly southerners, to what extent do you get a texture of what they think about Ulster and that unanticipated future?

There is a deep prejudice against the North – almost an ethnic prejudice. This is very strong the further south you get. Liam de Róiste, who kept a copious diary and whom I find a very attractive character, was a young



Figure 2
Bulmer Hobson. Photo: National Library of Ireland.



Figure 3
Rosamond Jacob. Photo: National Library of Ireland.

radical agitator from a very poor farming family, educated himself through night college, started little theatre groups, wrote reams of appalling poetry, tried to start up little magazines, and became a passionate Sinn Féin-er. When the Boundary Commission in 1925 ratified the boundary border between the North and the rest of Ireland, he is exactly the kind of person you would expect to be outraged. Previously he has written along the lines of 'They have got to understand. They have got to be Irish. They have got to come in with us.' But in 1925 he more or less says, 'Good riddance to them. They are intrinsically different from the South, and we are better off without them.'

Of the people I am interested in, Alice Milligan, Bulmer Hobson, Patrick McCartan, Sean MacDermott, Denis McCullough are all people who come from Ulster, or at least 'nine-county' Ulster. They invariably start with a great belief that they will reawaken the great tradition of Presbyterian radicalism, the United Irishmen, both sides joining in a great Republican movement and realising that more unites them against the British Government than divides them in the north-east. But, one and all, they give up and they come south. They come to Dublin, where people will agree with them. They pay lip service to the idea of radicalising the North into green Nationalism, but they know it's not going to happen.

Alice Milligan does go back to live in the North. This is partly because of disillusionment with what becomes of the Free State. She is no more keen on the North, but it

is where her family and her roots are. It's rather a sad story.

I think there is a lot of wilful blindness, and there is a lot of prejudice. Heaven knows, northern Unionists have never been in the business of making themselves likeable. But there is certainly a very strong sense of a border in the mind. In my treatment of the Ulster Literary Theatre, which was one attempt to create this kind of Nationalist consciousness in the North, it ends up underlining the border in the mind that exists between what will become Northern Ireland and the rest of the country.

I think that comes through very strongly from your depiction of the period from the 1890s onwards. If you were reading this and knew nothing at all about what was going to happen in Irish history, partition would come as no surprise, because the roots of it are so deep, tangled and complex.

We started with Yeats and I think we should end with him, as the book itself does. You draw a phrase from his famous poem about Easter 1916, about knowing the dream of the revolutionaries. As a scholar who has studied this generation as part of a much wider understanding of Irish history throughout your whole career,³ to what extent did your view of their dream change during the gestation of this book? Did you feel that the book changed you?

3. For example, R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (Penguin, 1988).

Yeats's phrase is: 'We know their dream; enough / To know they dreamed and are dead'. I felt that we didn't know their dream.

I was very determined not to be swayed by retrospective memory and by hagiography, which is a besetting sin of so much Irish history. I wanted to get back to what they were saying at the time.⁴ The more I read their diaries and letters, that is when I began to intuit dreams that were, as I said earlier, about secularism, escape from family, vegetarianism, antivivisectionism, feminism, socialism. And I realised that those dreams were some of the dreams that disappeared when the guns came out – not so much in 1916 itself, but when the guerrilla war began, and most especially when the civil war happened. Therefore, I suppose that, in trying to inhabit their hearts and minds, willy-nilly I broadened my own view of what the revolutionaries wanted.

The response to the book in Ireland has been very interesting. In some quarters, some surprise has been expressed at the extent of empathy that I seem to feel with revolutionary advanced nationalists this time. But I think the sheer energy of the idealism of these people is something with which one has to feel a certain sympathy.

We are back to your question about unforeseen futures. The fallout from sacrificial violence is very rarely worth the candle, and often, I think, produces a level of trauma and the advancing of all sorts of agendas that the people who have died for their faith would never have wanted to see. And then it inevitably ends up in political compromises, which will almost universally bring about a situation that is not that much terribly different from what could have been brought about by less glamorous and spectacular forms of politics which have been superseded along the way.

Vivid Faces is a book that is essential to the understanding of modern Ireland. But I have also recommended it to people who are interested more widely in the processes by which young people shift from comparative quiescence to violent forms of nationalism or other kinds of struggle. You have produced a book that is very sensitive to context,

4. Professor Foster was awarded a British Academy Wolfson Research Professorship (2009-2012) to carry out the research that led to *Vivid Faces*. 'The Wolfson Research Professorship gave me three vital and halcyon years just to plunge, at deep level, into the sources, to spend a lot of time in Ireland, to search out stuff, and then I was able to write up. Without that precious breathing space, I would still be trying to organise it. It was a wonderful book to research. The research was pure delight.'

to the role of individuals and small-group agency, and to understanding and empathising with the nature of what people do, however distasteful those legacies might turn out to be in the end. It is a work that has world historical resonance. For all of the difference between the early 20th century and the early 21st century, understanding the processes and the networks that you describe – you use the word 'radicalisation' in the book frequently, which is of course the word we now use about jihadism and so forth – can only properly be done by someone who brings a historian's mind to the subject.

The parallels with jihadism did of course occur, though I tried to suppress too obvious a connection. Especially in the relation between nationalism, religion, the family and repudiation, one kept seeing very strong parallels there.

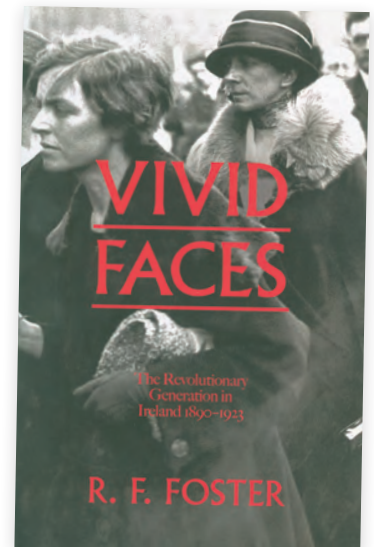
But I also saw parallels with a much more contemporary phenomenon: young Russian radicals, not so much in 1917 but in 1905, the student revolutionaries of St Petersburg. I was very struck by a book by Susan Morrissey called *Heralds of Revolution*, which had access to marvellous material which reflected the contemporary minds and hearts of that generation – surveys, letters and diaries. Even in the configuration of their backgrounds, often coming from families with a strong clerical predisposition, often medical students, they reminded me so much of their exact contemporaries, especially in the National University in Dublin at the same time.

I think one always has to be on the alert for these parallels. And if they are happening in the same cosmic timeframe, they are even more striking than if they are parallels that are repeated in a different era, about which one has to be much more careful – though they can still be enlightening.

This article is an edited version of the conversation.



For a longer version, including a discussion of how the 1916 centenary will be marked in Ireland, go to www.britishacademy.ac.uk/vividfaces/



Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland 1890-1923 by R.F. Foster was published in 2014, and reissued as a Penguin paperback in 2015.

Eric Hobsbawm and all that jazz

RICHARD J. EVANS

The latest annual collection of *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the British Academy*, published in December 2015, includes an extended obituary of Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012), written by Professor Sir Richard Evans FBA. Hobsbawm was one of the UK's most renowned modern historians and left-wing public intellectuals. His influential three-volume history of the 19th and 20th centuries, published between 1962 and 1987, put a new concept on the historiographical map: 'the long 19th century'. The full obituary may be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/memoirs/14/

This extract from the obituary reveals Eric Hobsbawm's less well-known interest in jazz.

There seemed to be no problem in Eric's combining his post at Birkbeck College [University of London] with his Fellowship at King's College Cambridge, but when the latter came to an end in 1954 he moved permanently to London, occupying a large flat in Torrington Place, in Bloomsbury, close to Birkbeck, which he shared over time with a variety of Communist or ex-Communist friends. Gradually, as he emerged from the depression that followed the break-up of his marriage, he began a new lifestyle, in which the close comradeship and sense of identity he had found in the Communist movement was, above all from 1956 onwards, replaced by an increasingly intense involvement with the world of jazz. Already before the war his cousin Denis Preston had played records by Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith and other musicians to him on a wind-up gramophone in Preston's mother's house in Sydenham. The two of them went to hear Duke Ellington play at a dance-hall in Streatham, from which Eric left 'captured for ever'. In the Soho jazz scene of the Fifties, he found a close-knit group of people, 'a sort of quasi-underground international freemasonry', a 'small and usually embattled group even among the cultural minority tastes'; the musical equivalent of the Communist Party, combining a sense of intimacy and belonging with a feeling of being out of



Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1976.

the mainstream, far from the centre of society.

Financial considerations also played a role in his growing involvement in the world of jazz. Having to pay the rent on a Bloomsbury flat instead of living in free lodgings in a Cambridge college, Eric needed some money on top of his modest academic salary, and when he noticed that the novelist Kingsley Amis, who surely

knew less about jazz than he did, was writing on the subject for a national newspaper, he asked Norman Mackenzie, whom he had known at the LSE, and now wrote for the *New Statesman*, to secure him the post of jazz critic for the magazine. He got the job, and began work on the paper as its regular jazz reporter under the pseudonym 'Francis Newton' (Frankie Newton was one of the very few American jazz musicians who was generally believed to have been a Communist), assumed because he thought, quite rightly, that it would not do his academic career much good if he wrote under his own name. It was also, perhaps, no coincidence that he took up his new activity just as the Soviet Union, which had long condemned jazz as a form of bourgeois decadence, was undergoing a post-Stalinist cultural thaw, releasing jazz musicians from the Gulag and allowing jazz bands to start up again. By this time, too, the cultural dictators of Communist regimes all across Eastern Europe had found another species of capitalist decadence to ban—rock-and-roll, in comparison to which jazz, along with the blues, appeared in a positive light as the music of the oppressed black working class in capitalist America.

Since, as the *New Statesman's* editor Kingsley Martin told him, the readers of the magazine were mostly male civil servants in their forties and therefore unlikely to go to jazz clubs, Eric was required to write his monthly column as a cultural reporter rather than a music critic, a slant that eminently suited his 'man-about-town' lifestyle of the late 1950s. Rather than frequenting Ronnie Scott's, where jazz fans went to listen, he preferred the Downbeat Club in Old Compton Street, which might occasionally feature a pianist but mainly served as a place where off-duty jazz musicians could drink and gossip. The players, he reported later, 'accepted me as an oddity on the scene', as a 'sort of walking reference book who could answer (non-musical) queries'. Drawn into 'the avant-garde cultural bohème', he became a participant observer of Soho life in the 1950s, teaching at Birkbeck between 6 and 9 in the evening, then spending night after night in the clubs and bars of Soho in 'the places where the day people got rid of their inhibitions after dark', mingling with rebels and nonconformists such as the singer George Melly, the Old Etonian trumpeter Humphrey Lyttelton, the theatre critic Kenneth Tynan, the painter Francis Bacon, the cartoonist Wally Fawkes ('Trog') and the writer Colin MacInnes. 'The affair between the solid citizen and the low life or the asocial', he remarked in 1962, was no longer 'furtive' but was 'now out in the open', a trend demonstrated by new movies such as *A Taste of Honey*: he might have noted that his remark also applied to himself. During his late-night sessions in the clubs, Eric got to know their habitués – drug addicts, prostitutes, musicians, poets, journalists and artists – well enough to write down some of their accounts of themselves, their lives and his relationships with them, characteristically prefacing one of them with a lengthy glossary of the drug addict's slang. The clubs, he noted, were also places where black and white people mixed on easy terms, and this at a time when racist white hostility to a decade of West Indian immigration and its consequences was increasing, culminating in the Notting Hill race riots of 1958 (Eric's articles for the *New*

Statesman indeed included an admiring account of the efforts of the jazz community in London to combat the racism that erupted in the riots).

Many of the brief articles that 'Francis Newton' contributed to the *New Statesman* were routine surveys of jazz festivals, 'records of the year', jazz movies and the like. More often than not they were clogged with names and titles, to cater for record-buying readers (Miles Davis was recommended, Dave Brubeck not). But there were more considered pieces on trends in jazz, on tradition versus modern, on the emergence of 'cool nightclubs' for the affluent, on the business aspects of the increasing number of American bands visiting the UK, on the virtual absence of female singers from the new wave of pop and many other similar topics. One of his articles attempted to explain why so many jazz musicians died young, a phenomenon Eric attributed to the long hours they worked, the instability of their lifestyle on the road, their lack of a steady income, their exploitation by agents, promoters and club owners, and the unhygienic conditions of the joints they played in ('The average bar or club in which the working life of many musicians is passed', he claimed, 'would not have got by a factory inspector in 1847'). Some of the articles moved beyond the jazz clubs into other parts of Soho. In one, published in March 1961, 'Francis Newton' explored the spread of strip clubs across the West End following the easing of legal restrictions in 1957. They ranged, he noted, 'from fairly elaborate set-ups to sleazy rooms with a few cinema seats occupied by single men who watch a succession of girls (interspersed by strip films) taking off their clothes contemptuously to the accompaniment of one and a half records'. Characteristically, he interviewed some of the strippers and their managers about the economic aspects of their employment, discovering that the girls got as little as £1 for a five-minute strip, though in more luxurious joints they could earn as much as £25 and even more for 'special acts', about which he did not go into any more detail; he ended, somewhat unrealistically, by urging the involvement of Equity, the actors' union, in organising them and campaigning for improvements in their pay and conditions of work.

Through his cousin Denis, now a leading record producer, Eric secured a commission from a publishing house, MacGibbon & Kee, founded in 1949 by Robert Kee, a journalist and historian, and James MacGibbon, a lifelong Communist who confessed on his deathbed in the year 2000 that he had leaked official secrets to the Soviet Union during the latter part of the war. MacGibbon and Kee had already produced books by Lyttelton and MacInnes, but the firm was not very successful commercially and was being bailed out of financial difficulties by Howard Samuel, a wealthy supporter of the Labour Party. They persuaded Eric to write a book about jazz, which was published in 1959 as *The Jazz Scene*, under his *New Statesman* pseudonym. This was not a collection of his articles, but a freshly written work in its own right. Aspects of the book reflect the introductory survey the publisher intended it to be, notably the chapters on 'how to recognize jazz', on style, on instruments and on the relationship of jazz to the other arts, but mainly the book is a work of

contemporary social history, and as such it showed all the hallmarks of Eric's other studies on more academic subjects. Like Eric's doctoral dissertation, it contained a statistical appendix providing a social breakdown of its subject, in this case based on the card-index files for the 820 members of the National Jazz Federation – only sixty were female, and the rest were an eclectic mix of young white-collar workers and skilled artisans, 'cultural self-made men', often of proletarian origins, revolting against the respectability of their parents' generation and the world of bourgeois high culture.

The meat of the book is in its account of the origins and rise of jazz, starting in New Orleans at the end of the 19th century. Although it expressed the discontent of the black and the poor, the marginal and the deviant, Eric saw the cultural revolt of jazz musicians and their public not as the prelude to organised resistance to exploitation, but as a diversion from political action. Eric wrote the book at a time when jazz was going through something of a golden age, with trad jazz (a very British style) being augmented by the more experimental bebop, and the big bands such as Duke Ellington's at the height of their fame. Already, however, there were signs that jazz was being overtaken by the rise of modern pop music, rhythm and blues and then the Beatles, all of which aroused his personal distaste as well as the hostility of the Communist movement. For nearly twenty years jazz musicians were to be eclipsed by what Eric in one of his *New Statesman* pieces called 'bawling juveniles', and when they finally re-emerged, it was to cater for a

minority taste in a musical niche, no longer a vehicle of moral and social rebellion against convention and propriety: the 'Swinging Sixties' put paid to all that, and the pop music of the day, he thought, reflected the shallow rebelliousness of the affluent young, not the righteous anger of the dispossessed. Thus, he predicted in a *New Statesman* piece, it would not last: the Beatles would be as quickly forgotten as calypso. Nevertheless, *The Jazz Scene* was reprinted several times, and quickly established itself as essential reading for jazz aficionados even in the 21st century.

Professor Sir Richard Evans FBA is President of Wolfson College, Cambridge. In 2015, the British Academy awarded him the Leverhulme Prize and Medal in recognition of his significant contribution to the field of Modern German History.



Edward Augustus Freeman: Making history

In October 2015, the British Academy published a volume of essays about the eminent Victorian historian, Edward Augustus Freeman (1823-1892).

In a discussion recorded in December 2015 to explore why Freeman is such an intriguing character, **Diarmaid MacCulloch Kt FBA** (Professor of the History of the Church, University of Oxford) put questions to the two editors of the volume, **Alex Bremner** (Senior Lecturer in Architectural History, University of Edinburgh) and **Jonathan Conlin** (Senior Lecturer in Modern British History, University of Southampton).

Who was Edward Augustus Freeman, and what sort of man was he?

He was a man of very outspoken opinions. He is perhaps known today largely for his *magnum opus* – *The History of the Norman Conquest of England* (Figure 1). However, as a medievalist colleague of mine described him, he is not so much the founding father of medieval studies, as the deranged great-uncle that – for your own sanity as well as his safety – you have walled up into your attic.

He was a great Victorian historian, who became Regius Professor at the University of Oxford. But when you start probing a bit more, he isn't exactly the sort of figure who would be seen as the ideal of a modern academic. In fact, he didn't spend most of his life in the university.

He didn't spend much of his time in libraries either.

That came up in one or two essays, and fascinated me. What is behind that, do you think?

Freeman was very much a member of the Somerset squirearchy. And he was very much a *paterfamilias* who – like other Victorians such as Gladstone – used their children and other members of their family as unpaid research assistants. It was a household built around his project, entirely subservient to churning out the volumes of his *magnum opus*, with their hundreds of footnotes and appendices, year after year.



Dr Jonathan Conlin and Dr Alex Bremner met the Reverend Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch Kt FBA at Trinity College, Oxford, to talk about the intriguing Victorian historian, Edward Augustus Freeman – in the shadow of his portrait.

So he is a bit like Darwin – changing the world in his study, rather than in the context of a university. And in one of your essays there is reference to him as 'a freelance historian and journalist'.¹ That essay emphasised the extraordinary volume of journalism that he brought out.

Stuart Jones points out that, for all the disdain Freeman might have expressed for journalistic approaches to history, his income from journalism was important for maintaining his life at his home 'Somersleaze' near Wells in Somerset. He could not have maintained the lifestyle to which he wanted to become accustomed had it not been for the fees that he received from the *Saturday Review*, the *Contemporary Review* and other periodicals.

In that sense he is rather a modern figure: he would have loved the internet. I was intrigued by the extraordinary mosaic of his opinions and interests.

In many respects Freeman is typical of the educated, Victorian elite of his time in having a view on most

1. Chapter 16: H.S. Jones, 'Historical mindedness and the world at large: E.A. Freeman as public intellectual', fn 13 (quoting Peter McNiven).

things worth pontificating about. He is certainly someone whose mind was very active, and that comes across very clearly in his letters. He was always musing about various topics and subjects, and you get the sense he really did want to express his opinion about these things, which is why he took to journalism in a big way.

Freeman was also born at the right time. The high Victorian period was a sweet spot in the development of various academic disciplines. You had the emergence of new 'sciences' – as history claimed to be – but they had not yet reached that point of specialisation where they had developed a jargon which would render their discussions impenetrable to a wider audience. An excellent example of this is the periodical named *The Nineteenth Century*, edited by James Knowles, which first appeared in 1877 and was the forum for high Victorian intellectual debate. This was perhaps the last moment at which it was still possible for the leading minds shaping subjects such as sociology or history to contribute an article – and feel that it was part of their duty to do so – in a form that was also accessible to a well-informed readership.

There is a rather amusing and entertaining essay on Freeman's visit to the United States.² It wasn't a terribly happy visit, was it?

There was a sense in which – as all British fans of the 'special relationship' are wont to do – Freeman was casting his American audience in a certain role, putting them in certain clothes which they did not recognise as their own, but which he insisted were those of a shared English national costume. Obviously, for the Irish-American community of the lower east side of Manhattan and other immigrant communities not from 'the old country' (as Freeman would see it), this was not very welcome at all. The idea of America as a melting pot was much cherished by them – a place where Old World identities were to be discarded, and a new identity was to be created in this crucible. Also, there was the very vital American belief, which they still have today, that 1776 was year zero: ideas of liberty were unknown until Washington and Jefferson taught us what they really meant. Therefore, for Freeman to come along and say '1776 is not the key date; it is 1066 that you should be thinking of' (and, patting them on the back in a rather patronising way, say 'You're doing an excellent job, keep at it; in a sense you are reliving our past, chopping down the trees of the Rocky Mountains as our Germanic ancestors did in the Teutoburger Wald') would not have gone down very well.

The theme of religion was clearly present all through his life. Perhaps that is the most difficult thing for a modern audience to grasp.

Freeman was someone who from an early age was very interested in the church, church history and the Bible. It is easy for us to forget just how important religion was to the Victorian frame of mind. As Theodore Hoppen noted, 'Never was Britain more religious than in the Victorian age.'

2. Chapter 6: Jonathan Conlin, 'The consolations of Amero-Teutonism: E.A. Freeman's tour of the United States, 1881–2'.

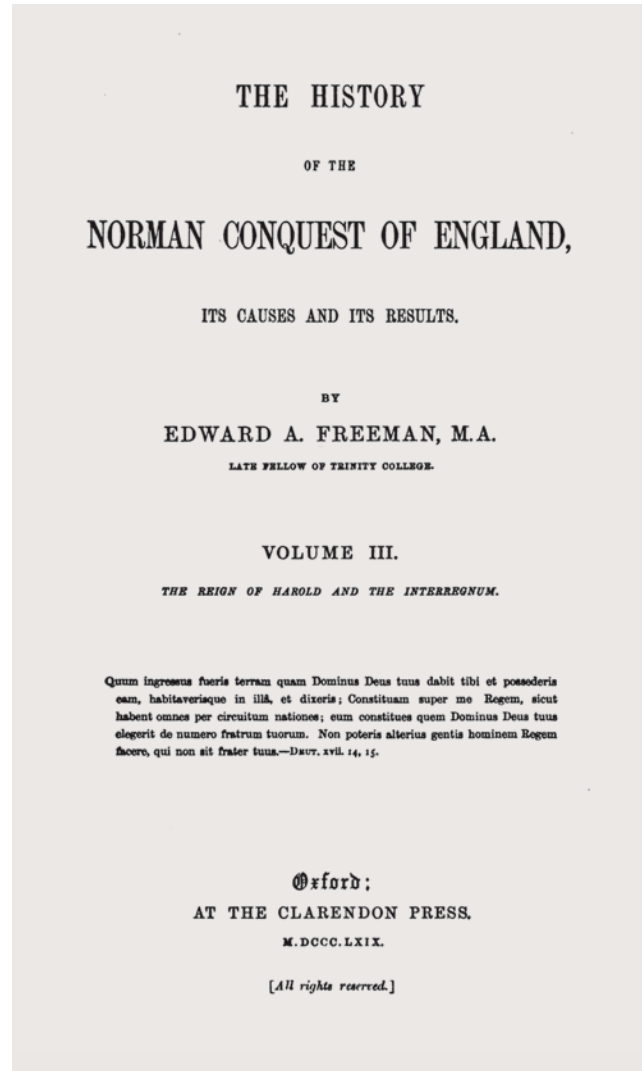


Figure 1 Edward Augustus Freeman's great work, *The History of the Norman Conquest, its Causes and its Results*, was published in six volumes between 1867 and 1879. This is the title page of Volume III, published in 1869.

For Freeman, religion was also wrapped up in a cultural sense of progress through time. In the writing of his mentor Thomas Arnold, who had also been Regius Professor, there was the notion that we had reached the third stage of a historical relay race – Greece handing on the cultural baton to Rome, which was then handed on to the Teutons and the Britons. So there was a millenarian streak, the idea that we were approaching the end times. This is something profoundly strange to today's historians – the idea that the world has been created by God, certain actors have been given their assigned roles and, when the drama has been played out, that is the end.

What makes his history much less cerebral than it otherwise might be is his interest in architecture. Can you say something about Freeman as an architectural historian?

From his early days at the University of Oxford, Freeman became mixed up in the formation of what would become the Oxford Architectural Society. This group was



Figure 2
From left to right: G.G. Scott, E.A. Freeman, and Freeman's wife, Eleanor, on a visit to St David's Cathedral, Pembrokeshire, c.1876. Photo: © Crown Copyright, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales.

formed in 1839 alongside a sister group at the University of Cambridge, and both of these organisations were concerned with dealing with the material dimensions of the Oxford Movement. This involved issues of liturgy, but also consideration of what proper Christian and religious architecture was. This aesthetic element attracted Freeman.

Freeman believed, like his mentor Thomas Arnold, in the idea of 'the unity of history'. Church architecture had a certain underlying spirit to it, which could be read in its overall planning, its overall massing. Freeman is way ahead of his time in the way he interprets architecture to tell a historical story, what these days we might call 'the material turn' in history. Freeman is doing this back in the 1840s, and this would not become mainstream in the history of architecture until sometime in the 20th century. And because he was ahead of his time in this respect, his ideas fell flat. This was partly because he was competing against the great architectural orator of the time, John Ruskin, who had whipped up a great deal of

enthusiasm with the publication of *The Stones of Venice*, and before that *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* – which appeared pretty much at the same time as Freeman's *A History of Architecture*. This explains why he despised Ruskin.

Freeman writes about the Gothic style as being almost an animate object, something like a tree that is growing, which is being manipulated and used by different races – sometimes successfully, e.g. when moulded by 'the plastic hand of the Northman', and sometimes unsuccessfully, e.g. by the Saracens (as he would call them) who actually invented the pointed arch of the Gothic style. In the end he becomes the champion of one of the greatest Victorian architects, George Gilbert Scott (Figure 2), in his efforts to get his way with the design of the new Foreign Office in London. Freeman comes out in defence of Scott like no other person in the world of British architecture, and he really presents himself as a champion of the Gothic Revival cause in that so-called battle of the styles between Classical and Gothic.

I was interested that his son-in-law was Arthur Evans, the great archaeologist.

Freeman was certainly someone fascinated by walking the ground on which historical actors had trod and on which battles such as that of Hastings (which he insisted we call the Battle of Senlac) had been fought. He was an inveterate traveller, though not necessarily the most cheerful of companions for those that were forced to travel western Europe with him.

One of the most striking appointments that Freeman made was of William Boyd Dawkins – whom we know as a natural scientist – to be, in Freeman's words, 'geologist to *Norman Conquest*'. It seems extraordinary to have a historian writing about the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries who feels that he needs a geologist to help him understand how the rocks on which the characters moved had been formed. There is a sense in which he almost sees certain landscapes as only existing or only justifying their existence as the backdrop for historical events.

It is strikingly modern this interest in the material and the sense of place, a really impressive dimension of the man. Less impressive is his great *obiter dictum*, the phrase that was inscribed on the wall at Johns Hopkins University, 'History is past politics and politics is present history'. It sounds good, but what on earth does it mean?

This again is 'the unity of history'. I think one of the most surprising things that Freeman says is that 'the past and the present are alike realities.' We as historians can be more present in historical events than those who were actually there could be. This is not simply because we have hindsight, but also because we have a historical mind and a certain intuition. It is not about having technical historical expertise. It is an authority that comes with historical mindedness, and it can allow us to recognise patterns as they happen in a way that those whom we would call eyewitnesses could not.

He ended up in a very conventional role in the University of Oxford. How did that happen?

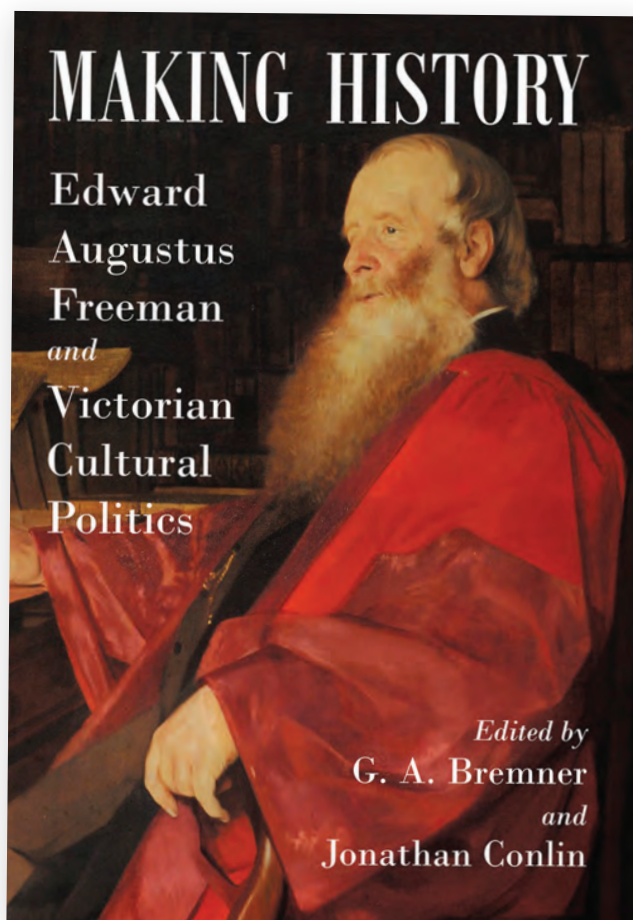
It happened way too late. He had felt himself to be the natural choice for the Regius Chair twice before he actually received it. When he did finally get this glittering prize that he had been yearning for, it was something of a disappointment to him. He never filled any of the large lecture halls that he hoped to fill, unlike his predecessors at Oxford and his equivalents at Cambridge – such as Goldwin Smith or Charles Kingsley, historians whom he did not consider worthy of the name. He was also suffering from poor health at this point, so the realisation of the dream was not as happy as I am sure he had depicted to himself when he first began writing *The History of the Norman Conquest* several decades before.

In the end, what is Freeman's legacy to us?

Freeman perhaps remains ahead of his time in seeing history as something that is not about the strangeness or the otherness of the past. As L.P. Hartley famously said, 'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.' Freeman thought the exact opposite of that. Today we are very nervous when history is too marked by ownership – when it is claimed by one group, whether it is a class or a nation state or, God forbid, a race, and is seen as a possession denied to others. Though we may not go as far as Freeman does, it is important to remind ourselves that history *is* a human possession, and also a national possession. It was ever thus and will always be so, even if there are people who want to try and give us that purely objective history which Freeman fought against for his entire career.



This article is an edited version of the conversation. A longer version can be heard via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/freeman/



Making History: Edward Augustus Freeman and Victorian Cultural Politics, edited by G.A. Bremner & Jonathan Conlin (*Proceedings of the British Academy*, 202) was published in October 2015. It is available from Oxford University Press via <http://global.oup.com/academic/product/making-history-9780197265871>

Hearing voices from the Chilembwe Rising

JOHN McCracken

In 1915, the Reverend John Chilembwe led a short-lived but violent uprising in the British Protectorate of Nyasaland – what is now Malawi – which sent shock waves through Britain’s possessions in south-east Africa. One hundred years later, the British Academy has published the evidence presented at the Inquiry that the British authorities held in the aftermath of ‘the Chilembwe Rising’.

The editor of the volume, Dr John McCracken, here explains the importance of these witness statements – not just for helping us understand the events of 1915, but as a unique record of African voices from the early 20th century.

Anyone who studies Malawian history has to make sense of the ‘Chilembwe Rising’. The Malawian government today wishes to make sense of it in rather simplistic terms, as a rising led by the first proto-nationalist. Indeed, a portrait of John Chilembwe appears on the banknotes that are used in Malawi.

But I find Chilembwe a much more complex character, and the Rising itself much more interesting. And it does provide an insight into the whole character of colonialism in Africa.

The Rising

The leader of the Providence Industrial Mission, the Reverend John Chilembwe (Figure 1), had been educated in the United States from 1897, and had come back to Malawi in 1900. He had established a series of schools and outstations, operating within the colonial system. Then in 1915, for reasons that are still debated, he led a small-scale, violent attack on aspects of that colonial society.

The most dramatic, on Saturday 23 January, was the attack on the headquarters of the huge, 163,000-acre Magomero estate (Figure 2), run by Alexander Livingstone Bruce, who was the grandson of David Livingstone. The attack centred on the estate manager, William Jervis Livingstone (Figure 4), who may have been a remote relation of David Livingstone. His head

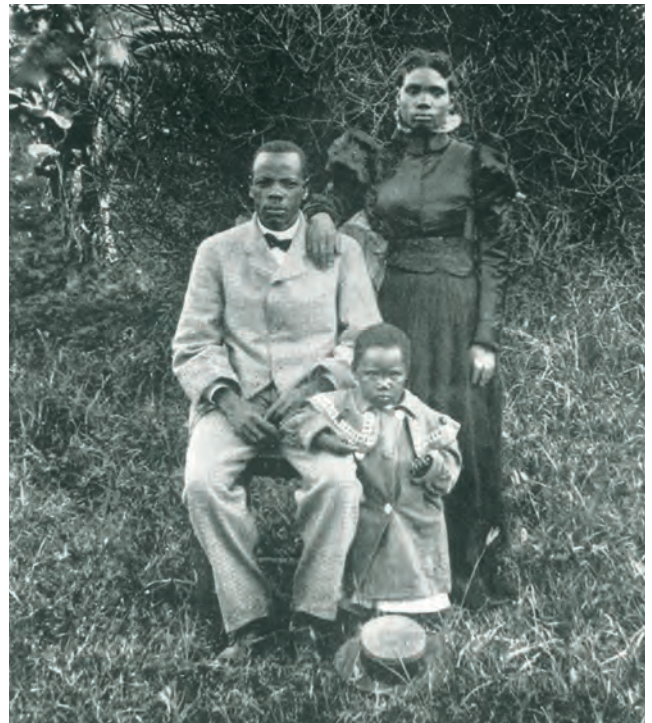


Figure 1
John Chilembwe, his wife Ida and daughter Emma, photographed by Mungo Murray Chisuse.

was cut off and was brought back to the church, where John Chilembwe preached a sermon on the Sunday with the head beside him on a pole. There were attacks on the subsidiary station, and three Europeans were killed. And then there were attacks on the African Lakes Corporation headquarters, Mandala, at Blantyre, to try and get guns and ammunition. Subsequently there were smaller attacks in Zomba, the colonial capital, and in Ncheu further north, and at Mlanje, but none of those three really took off.

The whole thing was over in a matter of days. Very few people were killed on the colonial side. Subsequently some 30 people were executed, and many more were imprisoned for lengthy periods (Figure 3).



Figure 2
Carrying cotton to store on the Magomero estate, 1908. Courtesy of the Zimbabwe National Archives.

Reaction

The Rising did create an extraordinary *frisson* in colonial society – the fear that this was a challenge of a sort that they had not previously contemplated and now had to face up to. It is true that some individuals – such as Alexander Hetherwick, the leader of the Blantyre Mission – were very dismissive, regarding it as a small-

scale affair whose significance was grossly exaggerated by the colonial authorities. But the Governor, Sir George Smith, saw this as an event that created a new era in the history of Nyasaland. It meant that they would have to develop a police force in a much more effective way. And it meant that they would have to take a series of measures to meet what were seen as real concerns among African people.



Figure 3
Supporters of John Chilembwe being led into captivity. Courtesy of Malawi National Archives.

We must remember that this was 1915, the middle of the First World War. In many ways the British were more concerned about German East Africa and the war that was taking place there. Chilembwe had taken advantage of the war, as the soldiers were up in the north and there were fewer around in the Shire Highlands. He certainly had tried to make contact with the German authorities, and imagined that he might get some sort of support there.

It is interesting that the following year, 1916, was the year of the Easter Rising, which has its similarities with the Chilembwe Rising. There were those at the time who made comparisons between the two.

Inquiry

The Rising was in January 1915. The Inquiry was held in June and July 1915. There were 62 witnesses who were examined. And the key thing is that there was a stenographer present, so what you get is a verbatim account of the questions asked and the answers given – assuming the stenographer was accurate.

The greater number of witnesses were Europeans – missionaries, government officials and settlers. But 19 were Africans. Some of those were relatively elite Africans – ministers in the Church of Scotland, interpreters for the government, some chiefs, and people who worked on the Magomero estate.

When I entitled the volume *Voices from the Chilembwe Rising*, I was not being entirely accurate. We aren't hearing those who actually took part in the Rising, because those people were dead or in prison, or had fled into Mozambique. Rather they are the voices of people who were close to Chilembwe and the events. But they are *their* voices. It is quite rare in this period to have a record of voices from southern central Africa speaking directly in the way that they do. The Inquiry also received a number of written statements, and some of these are about Chilembwe and who he was. These are the earliest attempts by Malawians to try and make sense of Chilembwe, so this gives the evidence a special quality

As a historian, you have got to be aware of the limitations of this material. For example, there was the whole nature of the Inquiry. The high court judge who was chairing the Commission was a man who had sentenced to death a number of people in the same courtroom a few weeks before. Were the witnesses going to be truthful in what they said in front of him? In fact, the African witnesses seem incredibly frank in their replies. When they were asked about African grievances, they really went to town – they weren't being diplomatic. They had been told beforehand that they were not going to be arrested or punished for what they said, and they took this at face value.

There is also the issue of whether the Commission sometimes avoided asking difficult questions. One incident that was embarrassing for the colonial government related to the Assistant Resident at Chiradzulu, really close to where Chilembwe had his headquarters. He was told by his staff that there were armed men wandering around on the night of Friday



Figure 4
William Jervis Livingstone in his uniform as a member of the Nyasaland Volunteer Reserve, 1914. He was killed in the attack on Magomero, and his head was cut off. Courtesy of David Stuart Mogg.

22 January; and the next day he disappeared off to Blantyre and was not seen for a couple of days. There was certainly a sense amongst the Europeans of 'Why did he go? What was this man doing?' However, the Commissioners didn't really follow that up. I suspect this was an awkward matter better talked about in private.

But issues of this sort add to the value and interest of these documents. We are not dealing with unproblematic sources, and we need to interpret and think about them.

Testimony

There are a number of ways in which the testimony reproduced in this book is important. One aspect which comes through very strongly is the extent of the use of violence, of *chikoti* – whipping and flogging – which was seen as almost a matter-of-fact part of the behaviour of getting workers to work on plantations and estates.

Linked to this is the ambiguous position of the *capitaos* or foremen. You might imagine that such people would be particularly loyal to the estate owner, given that they were being paid more money and had more privileges. But if you look in detail at the Rising, many of the people who led the various quasi-military expeditions were



Joseph Bismarck and family at Domasi, c.1887. Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland.

Extract from the evidence given to the Inquiry by Joseph Bismarck, 14 July 1915

Joseph Bismarck was one of the pioneer African land-owners and traders in the Blantyre area. Born c.1859 in the Quelimane district of Mozambique, he obtained his name as a boy from French merchants who believed he looked like the German Chancellor. He came to the Malawi region in 1876, joined the Blantyre Mission in 1878, and quickly made himself invaluable as an interpreter who spoke both English and Chinyanja. By the early years of the 20th century he had an estate of 150 acres at Namwili on which he grew bananas, groundnuts and potatoes for the Blantyre market, as well as having a good herd of cattle. He remained closely associated with the Blantyre mission, maintained a school at his own expense at Soche and, in 1903, was elected representative elder to the Blantyre Presbytery. He was also closely associated with John Chilembwe as a fellow member of the Natives Industrial Mission, founded in 1909.

*

[Chairman of the Inquiry]: Now about taking off the hat to Europeans. What is the grievance about that?

I myself have grievance about that.

You are very polite in taking off your hat.

However polite one may be, one has to suffer at the same time.

What is your grievance?

The natives, especially the educated natives always have a grievance about the hat. They say that in the old days they did not know what hats were, and they had no clothes. But now they are glad the European has come into the country and offered them to us for sale. And now they buy them and wear them. And when they go out with these on, they find war outside and inside as well.

How inside?

If you pass along a street with a hat on, if you don't be polite you will suffer for it. I can say as to that myself. I have been three times, myself, assaulted. So the natives say that when they go outside, say from here to Limbe with hats on "Now I am educated and am a free man". When he meets a European on the way whom he does not know and when he gets about 10 yards from the European, he says "Good morning, Bwana", he takes off his hat and nothing is said to him. If he doesn't take off his hat, it is said to him "Take off your hat." And if he refuses to take off his hat, he is told "I will give you chigoti [whip]". And therefore, for fear, he has to take off his hat and carry it under his arm; and educated natives say that that is not liberty, and that we are just treated as slaves. [Bismarck gave an account of two episodes he had personally experienced, and then continued] The third is with Mr Conforzi, on the way to Mbami.

How many years ago is this?

About two years ago. This gentleman was in his machila [portable hammock]. My friends, who were in front, passed on, and I saw him coming, and when he was close to me, I took off my hat. And he said "Take off your hat, you nyani [baboon]". And I said "I am not a nyani. I am a living being like yourself". He said "I will shoot you". And he pulled out his revolver. And I said "Shoot me". And I said "Why?" And he said "You are a blackman and I am a whiteman, and you must take off your hat".

Now, it is the same with all natives. And I want to ask you please if hats are evil things for natives to wear, why do companies bring out these materials and say they are for sale? If they are for sale – do they say that when we buy it we are to take it and put it in our house? We know how to pay respect. And it was a well known thing when the Europeans came into the country. The first courtesy is to a chief. But a stranger cannot say "Take off your hat." But if I meet a gentleman whom I don't know – is he to give me a stick on my head. Sometimes I used to throw my hat off, because I thought it was a burden to me. The natives thought that the matter of hats was meant to be civilization. They didn't know that if they were to use it, it was to be a danger to them. So we have brought this grievance to you.

themselves present or former *capitaos* who had worked on the Magomero estates. They did so because they were at the sharp end of the process. They themselves were subjected to floggings and indignities of that sort. But also they had attempted to have a school and a church built on the Magomero land, and these were destroyed: Bruce refused to allow churches or schools to exist on his estates, because he thought that they were just a trouble. So you can pull together very interesting information on the *capitaos* and the way in which they became disillusioned with the system.

There is also interesting testimony about what you could call ‘the matter of a hat’. For a number of the elite Malawians who gave evidence, the issue that they took up most strongly in respect of how they were ill-treated, was how settlers regarded their clothes, and particularly the issue of wearing a hat. They felt that, if you wore a hat and you went to Blantyre, you would ‘find war’. The white Europeans who met you would say, ‘Take off your hat!’ And if you did not take off your hat, they would strike you. And this felt like slavery – yet the Europeans claimed they were getting rid of slavery. The language of Joseph Bismarck says this most clearly (see extract on facing page), but there are several others who come back and harp on the hat question. Of course, the colonial officials were all bemused by this. What on earth were they talking about? Indeed, the great majority of Malawians were not obsessed by the hat question – it was only a limited number. But if you want to explain why several members of that limited number followed Chilembwe – Duncan Njilima, John Gray Kufa (Figure 5) – people who were well educated, owned their own small estates, and had done well out of the system – then I think it was because of this attack on their honour.

So that is one of the features that comes through. I would say, however, more generally, that this is a book in which I hope readers can find more: about Chilembwe – because there are a number of individuals who met Chilembwe and told in verbatim language about their encounters and the things that he said, and his attempts to get black Church of Scotland ministers to become members of his own church, and so on; about the details of the Rising; but more than that, about the whole nature of colonial society at that time.



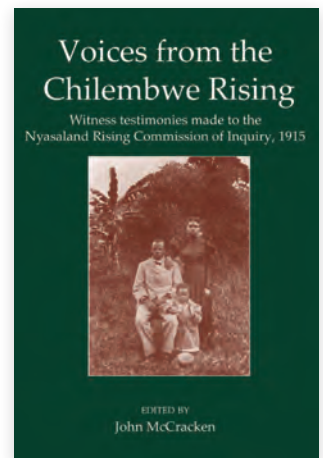
Figure 5
John Gray Kufa photographed c.1910 by Mungo Murray Chisuse. An outstanding product of the Blantyre Mission and subsequently an independent landowner, Kufa became one of Chilembwe’s closest associates. He was executed following the Rising.

This article is an edited version of remarks made by Dr John McCracken in conversation with Dr Michael Brett, the General Editor of the British Academy’s *Fontes Historiae Africanae (Sources of African History)*, New Series.



A longer version of the interview can be heard via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/chilembwe-rising/

Voices from the Chilembwe Rising: Witness Testimonies made to the Nyasaland Rising Commission of Inquiry, 1915, edited by John McCracken, was published in December 2015 in the British Academy’s *Fontes Historiae Africanae (Sources of African History)*, New Series. It is available from Oxford University Press via <http://global.oup.com/academic/product/voices-from-the-chilembwe-rising-9780197265925>



The origin of Arabs: Middle Eastern ethnicity and myth-making

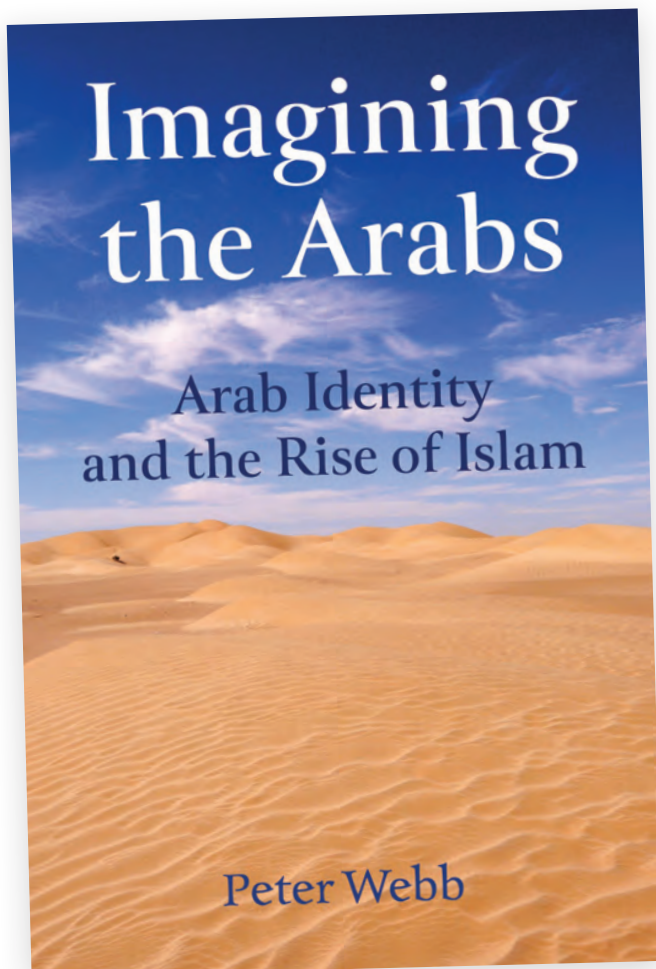
PETER WEBB

Dr Peter Webb is currently a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London

The Arab world', never a region far removed from the light of public attention, has now a seemingly firmer grip on the imagination than ever. 9/11 and then the 2011 Arab Spring saturated our media with the misadventures of foreign intervention, the flamboyant

path of Arab Gulf states surfing waves of swelling oil prices, and apprehensions about political Islam. And today, the current mass migration of Arab peoples is physically transplanting the Arab world from headlines to the highways of central Europe. The prominence of Arabs in public consciousness is accompanied by a concomitant interest in Arab identity: who are the Arabs, and can understanding their history help make better sense of the present? In search for answers, the questions' complexities invite careful consideration of traditional assumptions about Arabs.

The familiar conception of 'the Arab' often condenses in images of an ancient desert Arabia where bescarved, independent-minded clusters of Bedouin herd camels into narratives of Arab origins. It is then assumed that, following this ancient Bedouin incubation, Arab migrations at the dawn of Islam in the 7th century CE spread the Arabs across the Middle East, and the core of their expansion laid the ground of today's Arab world.



European accounts

Such principal archetypes about Arab origins have, at least, a long pedigree. Some 2,500 years ago, Greek writers crafted a literary ideal of 'the Arab' via composite admixtures of exotic distance, harsh deserts, frankincense, and nomadic warriors. Strabo's accounts of Arabians as 'tent dwellers and camel herds' in central Arabia, 'subsisting upon [camel] milk and flesh', melded with fabulous impressions of Arabia's remote shores where Agatharchides reports the

fragrance which greets the nostrils and stirs the senses of everyone – indeed, even though those who sail along Arabia's coast may be far from the land, that does not deprive them of a portion of the enjoyment ... the sweet odours exhaled by the myrrh-bearing and other aromatic trees penetrate to the near-by parts of the sea.

The sum of classical Greek literature pinned Arab identity onto an archaic tableau, entrenching an iconic image of the Arabs' original state in a sublime, exotic desert, and the Greeks bequeathed their ideas to the present. Our



Figure 1
Assyrian wall relief depicting Assyrian combat against 'Aribi' (reign of Ashurbanipal 668-627 BCE). Photo: British Museum 124926.

world is much beholden to Hellenistic heritage: a Greek lens is often grafted onto the eyes of our intellectual enquiries; but taking classical Greeks at their word has downsides, as ethnographers have recently found. The Greeks were fond of marshalling stereotypes to label distant populations whom they little understood, and as a result, they inaugurated one-dimensional images of, for example, 'Celts' and 'Berbers' alongside 'Arabs' to epitomise vast groups of people whom they classified as 'barbarians'. Modern groups redeployed Greek archetypes of Celts and Berbers to underwrite manifold nationalist discourses from Ireland to Algeria, but scholars now radically deconstruct former assumptions about ethnic identities and move beyond Greek testimony to reconstruct ancient history. Consequently, Celtic and Berber origins are much revised today, yet the idea of 'Arabs' has mostly escaped critical scrutiny.

The old association of Arabs with desert 'barbarians' has survived thanks, in part, to its usefulness for later Europeans. The idea that 'authentic Arabs' were primitive Bedouin fitted squarely within the Enlightenment search for specimens of humanity in a 'state of nature', and set European scholarly enquiry on an inexorable skew privileging Bedouin as the paragons of Arab identity. Arabic speakers in the towns and villages of the wider Middle East were somewhat less interesting: prejudices relegated them to a dull halfway house, neither in their 'natural', 'authentic' desert habitat, nor fully developed to the then prevailing notions of 'civilisation'. The Victorian explorer W.S. Blunt was typically adamant, declaring Arab racial purity vested in Arabian Bedouin, not urban Middle Easterners whom he dubbed 'the Arabic-speaking Copt of Egypt, the Canaanites of Syria ... and the bastard Iraqi'. Bedouin also enticed Bible savants, for they believed that the 19th-century central Arabian lifestyle had changed so little since Antiquity that Bedouin were thought still to perpetuate the lifestyle

of Moses's wandering people. In this vein, another Victorian, Charles Doughty, offered his travelogue, *Arabia Deserta* (the title pointedly resurrects classical Greco-Roman geographic nomenclature to define 19th century Arabia), for readers to gain 'insight and understanding' into the Old Testament. Explorers and historians took excited plunges into Arabia for opportunities to watch the Bible and Antiquity play out before their eyes in Bedouin campsites, and the weight of Greek tradition accentuated by several centuries of European writing leaves the public today with an abiding emphasis on the ancient, exotic and often the primitive as the prism through which Arabness materialises.

Lost amidst the manifold opinions about 'authentic Arabs' however, was the voice of Arabs themselves. Who do Arabs think they are, which actual Middle Eastern populations expressed their own identity as 'Arab', and what has the word 'Arab' meant to those who invoked it to describe their community? The questions invite us to step away from Greco-Roman, Enlightenment and Colonialist discourses, and take a fresh plunge into the archaeology of ancient Arabia and Arabic literature. Such an enquiry has preoccupied my research to date, and the findings in my first monograph, *Imagining the Arabs*,¹ have stirred a host of new questions now clamouring for scrutiny in my British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship. Let us consider what happens when we begin to rethink the Arabs.

Pre-Islamic 'Arabs'?

History reports its first apparent 'Arab' in annals of the Iraqi-based Neo-Assyrian Empire (911-612 BCE). The

1. Peter Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* will be published by Edinburgh University Press in summer 2016 (ISBN 978-1474408264).

Assyrians pushed their frontiers towards south-western deserts where they encountered nomadic camel-herding peoples whom their administrators labelled with names such as *Arba-a*, *Aribi*, *Urbi* etc. (Figure 1). These names sound to us like 'Arab', and thus purportedly depict the earliest generations of 'the Arab people', but examination of Assyrian texts reveals that the names were likely coined by the Assyrians. 'Arab'-sounding words in the Assyrian language connoted 'desert steppe', 'outsider', 'westerners' and 'locusts': the names we encounter in Assyrian records therefore articulate what Assyrians thought of distant, disparate and pesky groups along their frontier, and do not necessarily reflect how Arabian groups organised themselves. Pointedly, inscriptions from inside Arabia neither contain reference to the name 'Arab' nor indicate that central Arabian populations imagined themselves as one communal unity. What appeared to Assyrian administrators as a vast desert filled with 'Arabs' was instead a patchwork of disparate groups whose memories are now lost casualties of history. The word 'Arab' thus began its history not as the term of self-reference for one ancient Arabian race, but instead as a generic label applied by outsiders to describe any group whom they thought was a 'Bedouin locust/menace'.

After the fall of the Assyrians, the succeeding Babylonian and then Achaemenid Persian empires inherited the Assyrian administrative system, and as they occupied the same frontiers, they perpetuated the Assyrians' 'Arab'-sounding words to label various groups who buffeted the borders over subsequent centuries, but inner Arabian populations still left no records in which they refer to themselves as 'Arabs'. It was into this worldview whereby empires used the word 'Arab' generically for dimly perceived desert outsiders that the Greeks emerged and began writing 'Arabs' into their histories. Like the Assyrians, the Greeks had little direct contact with Arabia beyond the desert frontier, and their unfamiliarity with the region permitted their generalisation that outside the Fertile Crescent lived a world of roughly homogenous 'Arabs'. 'Arab' became a convenient device to cut-and-dry the 'barbarians' to the south, and what appears in classical literature as the supposed original state of 'the Arab people' is very much like Greek generalisations about 'Celts': an imprecise guesstimate augmented by literary flourish, not a reflection of a budding Arab community across Arabia.

Suspensions that there was no ancient 'Arab community' in Arabia are corroborated by Arabian voices from the centuries before Islam. Archaeologists have unearthed thousands of pre-Islamic inscriptions from Yemen to Jordan, and reference to 'Arab' as a label for oneself or one's own community is absent within this corpus. Even evidence for the Arabic language itself is trace. It appears that Arabians in the first centuries CE were a scattered array of very diverse peoples, speaking somewhat related but distinct languages, and lacking a sense of political, communal or cultural unity. There are no ancient indigenous myths of common origin tying Arabian populations together into an imagined 'Arab family', and there was neither a common religion nor a set of shared symbols which communities could use to construct unities, as Arabia's confessional map was

divided between Christians, Jews, polytheists and some less ascertainable monotheistic creeds. Instead of a pre-Islamic Arabia filled with 'Arabs', we find that peoples in central Arabia referred to themselves as Ma'addites, southern Arabia (Yemen) was organised into kingdoms with very particular languages and state structures, populations on the eastern Gulf were oriented towards Iran with limited political or cultural commonalities with other Arabians, and in the north the Roman/Byzantine and Persian empires warred against each other, creating divisive alliances that blocked pathways by which peoples could unite under a common identity.

The straightforward Greek projections of Arab origins in a Bedouin mould thus seem, upon close analysis, to be most misleading. Numerically, most of Arabia's pre-Islamic populations were not Bedouin, they did not express a common unity, and it appears that none called themselves Arabs. The ingredients needed to classify pre-Islamic Arabians as members of one Arab ethnicity are wanting. And accordingly, Victorian impressions about the Arab racial purity of Bedouin are misplaced too, since Arab identity does not stem from an archaic lifestyle. To use the word 'Arab' as descriptive of a primitive way of life merely replicates prejudices of Assyrian and Greek writers, taking us away from a truthful understanding of Middle Eastern communities.

Finding the first Arabs

To begin reconstructing the history of people who called *themselves* 'Arabs', we must cross into the Islamic period. During the century after Muhammad (d. 632), poetry is recorded in which individuals make novel expressions of being Arab. The first Islamic century is also when Arabic-language inscriptions proliferated across Arabia and the Middle East (Figure 2). And the first two centuries of Islam witnessed both the earliest discernable attempts to write Arab history in Arabic, and the genesis of genealogies and myths of origins that tie pan-Arabian populations together into one ethnic community. The evidence indicates that people became conscious of being Arab and took the first tangible steps to define Arab identity after their conversion to Islam.

The stark proliferation of 'Arabs' following Islam's rise invites the correcting of old stereotypes and paves new avenues to understand Arabness. The first people who called themselves Arabs were the elite of the early Caliphate. They inhabited new towns founded by Muslims across the Middle East (e.g. the places we know as Cairo, Basra, Baghdad), and they rigorously distinguished themselves from Bedouin. As far as my research has taken me, being Arab did not signify an antique sense of Arabian nomadic origin, but was instead a novel means for early Muslims to express what it meant to belong to their exclusive group of converts to Islam and to the elite of a new, mostly urban empire. Arabness emerges as an end-product of the remarkable success of early Islam whereby the new religion, conquest and reorganisation of the Middle East created a whole new way in which Middle Eastern peoples understood their communities. The pathways by which early Muslims

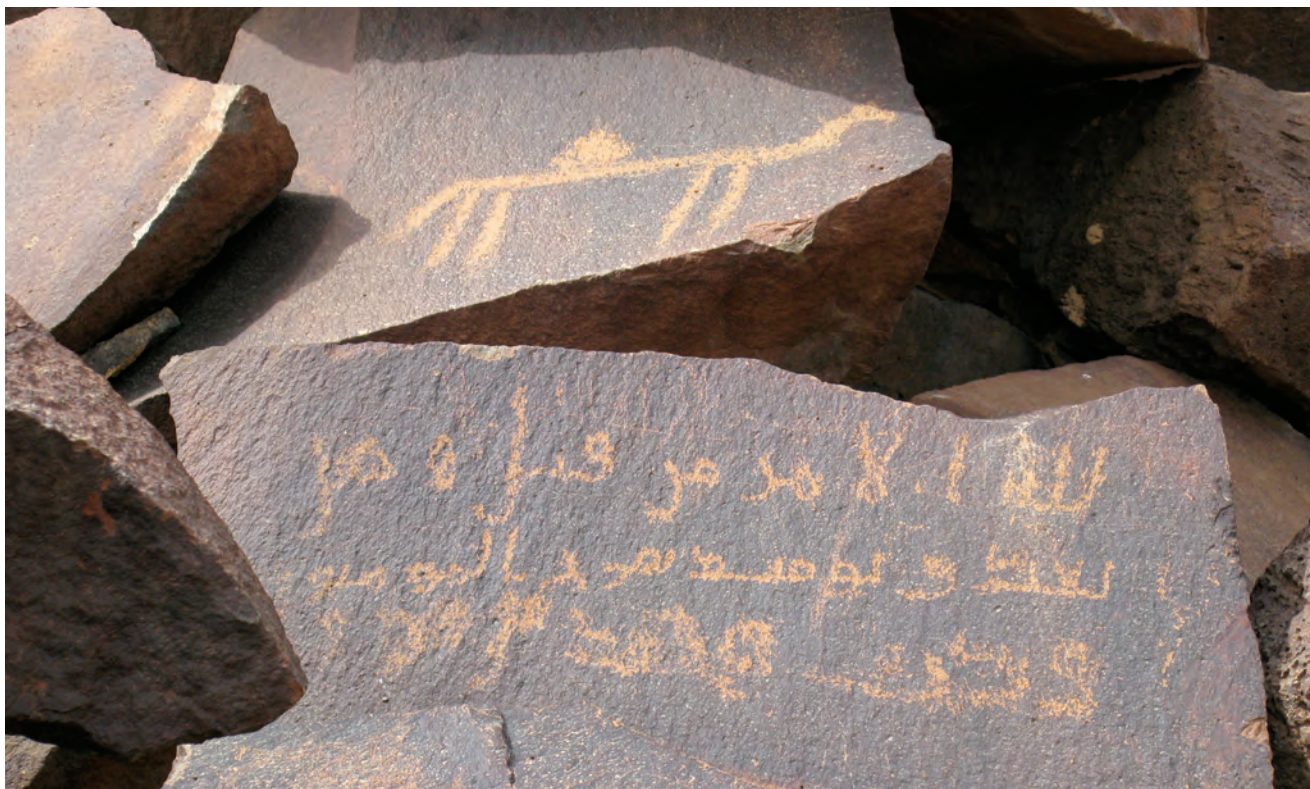


Figure 2
Inscriptions from Jabal Says (southern Syria, 7th Century CE), the text includes part of Qur'an 30:4 and is an example of the marked proliferation of Arabic writing following the dawn of Islam. Photo: the author.

became 'Arabs' were complex, and Arabness took almost a century to gain consent as a collective identity. But these findings now enable us to appreciate better the creative energies of Islam's rise and the powerful forces it mustered which stamped major and enduring changes on the region's society and culture.

Tracing the origins of Arabness as a means for various Muslim groups to conceptualise their identity also helps explain why many today believe that 'Arab' is synonymous with 'Muslim'. At the outset, the two did connote very closely related ideas, but as Islam expanded beyond its original elites, and as the elites' social standing evolved over time too, Arab and Muslim identities struck separate paths and acquired rich histories: their common origins nonetheless remain intertwined and important to remember. When thinking of Arabs today, the legacies of empire and monotheism are closer to the intellectual underpinnings of Arab national identities than camels and idols.

The Islamic-era origin of Arab identity also renders Arabs much in common with European nations. The early medieval period was an apparently fertile moment of community creation across Eurasia, a peculiar time when people were empowered to discover radically new ways to imagine and articulate their identities, and generated traditions that endure to the present. Unlike the exotic 'othered' Bedouin of Colonialist fancy, we can now appreciate that Arabs stepped into history at the same time and under similar conditions as European nations.

My monograph, *Imagining the Arabs*, tracks the tale of Arab ethnogenesis from the divided and diverse world of

pre-Islamic Arabian Ma'addites, Himyarites, Ghassanids and others, to the Muslim-era Arabs across the Middle East. Against the grain of long-standing traditional assumptions about the antiquity of the Arabs, the book tackles the empirical questions of 'when, where and who' in order to give clarity to the path by which peoples thought their way into becoming Arabs. It also traces how the meaning and significance of Arab identity shifted in line with major social changes during Islam's first four centuries. As the Muslim faith and Arabic language eventually embedded themselves across the Middle East, the numbers of people identifying themselves as 'Arabs' ironically decreased, and the fate of Arab communities in medieval times tracked a fascinating path shared between the unusual combination of Muslim political elites, armed Bedouin bands and urban Iraqi grammarians.

With the ground thus cleared for new avenues of reflection, even more complex issues now arise. They solicit a shift from the macro-question of 'who are the Arabs?' to a subtler analysis of 'how did individuals change who they thought they were and imagine themselves as Arabs?' Such lines of research hold promises to understand better the different layers upon which Arab identity was constructed, and moreover, because Arabness and Islam are so intimately interconnected, the study offers a direct path to apprehend better the formative period of Islam itself. Imagining an Arab identity involved articulating the contours of being Muslim, and unfurls the panoply of ways early Muslims interpreted the meaning and significance of their Islamic faith, and established the first layers of Muslim identity.



Figure 3

The tales of 'Antar and 'Abla have enduring popularity: they are now frequently illustrated, and have even been serialised for Arabic television audiences. Image: 20th-century painting on glass by Abousoubhi Tinawi; © The Art Archive/Alamy Stock Photo.

Thinking about Arabs and Islam afresh

Communities need to construct a shared sense of the past in order for their members to gel into one cohesive group; and because a given group's members usually hail from diverse backgrounds, that sense of past unity is quite often imaginary. In the case of early Islam, Arabs created myths about pre-Islamic Arab origins to replace pre-Arabic memories and to forget the fact that consciousness of Arab identity only coalesced in the Islamic era. Their stories were popular, they circulated widely and were much augmented over time, indicating their importance to the members of early Muslim communities. Medieval Muslim interest in Arabs and pre-Islamic Arabia has bequeathed us a vast library of Arabic literature invoking memories of pre-Islam. The literature was formerly considered a store of data which could be mined for 'facts' about pre-Islamic Arab ways, but with the realisation that pre-Islamic Arabness was cobbled together by Muslims to create a novel sense of mythic 'Arab' history, we now need to appraise the old stories afresh.

At this juncture, the award of a British Academy Post-

doctoral Fellowship makes my new enquiry possible. My new questions require a shift of focus from ethnicity and historiography to theories of memory and literature, in order to grasp the mythologies and aesthetics that coloured and informed the worldviews of early Arabs.

My new subjects of analysis are Muslim tales of giants and ghouls, heroic warriors and swashbuckling bandits, bygone civilisations and past prophets. The stories speak to us from an array of different kinds of books, ranging from texts about the Prophet Muhammad, in which he refers to pre-Islamic times and practices, to philological discussions of the Arabic language where stories of pre-Islamic Arabia are developed to prove the correct 'purity' of Arabic grammar, to histories and popular story cycles where poetry and prose mixed into epic tales sharing intriguing parallels to the structure and content of Norse sagas. The processes of narrative generation were much involved: for example, we encounter the half-Arabian, half-African 'Antara, whose memory began with one famous pre-Islamic ode, and then, over several centuries was elaborated into the epic of 'Antar, a desert warrior and star-crossed lover whose betrothal to an oft-kidnapped bride spawned an endless multi-volume

narrative of travails (Figure 3).

The task of my analysis is two-fold. First, I aim to discern how Muslim writers confronted vestiges of pre-Islam and wove them into new discourses. Edifices of bygone empires from Antiquity still stood as reminders of the past (Figure 4): in what ways did Muslims remember these places, and can we discern a rationale to help explain what history they chose to forget, and what they opted to remember? Comparing the testament of pre-Islamic inscriptions and Late Antique historiography with the Muslim-era versions of history can elucidate answers. And second, the Muslim narratives themselves deserve concerted scrutiny: how were they crafted over time, how were they in dialogue with each other, and how did Muslims marshal stories of pre-Islam to construct a sense of their own origins? My impression is that the ingredients of pre-Islam in medieval Muslim imaginations were apprehended with senses of wonderment and the sublime, fascination and sometimes (but not often) revulsion. Tales of the past desert contrasted with medieval Muslim writers' urban present, and pre-Islamic Arabia represented something of a 'Wild West', an Arcadia and a Parsifal-esque narrative for the Arab hero, melding to form the fictional underpinning of Muslim civilisations.

My aim is to write a second monograph, provisionally entitled *Memory and Myth: The Muslim reconstructions of pre-Islam*. For an academic, such a move from one book to another with the added need to develop a distinct theoretical method of textual analysis is a little akin to a farmer seeking multiple crops from the same field. One needs good rains and time. The British Academy grant and its three-year timeframe provides such nurturing for my research, facilitating the application of modern theories to reappraise old texts, and hopefully permitting fresh answers to the difficult questions about how myth, entertainment and polemic offered Muslims an array of avenues to explain who they thought they were.



Figure 4
Petra, a 1st-century CE capital of the Nabataean kingdom. Muslims reinterpreted Nabataean ruins as the bygone cities of Thamud, an obscure people mentioned in the Qur'an, but absent in Judeo-Christian scripture. Muslims believed that a prophet Salih had been sent to Thamud, and they depicted Salih as an Arabian monotheistic precursor to Muhammad. Photo: the author.

The academic book of the future



As the British Academy's contribution to Academic Book Week in November 2015, the *British Academy Review* conducted a short

series of interviews with a number of British Academy-supported early career scholars on different aspects of academic book publication.



Audio recordings of these interviews can be heard via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/academicbookweek2015

The issues are discussed further here by Professor **Mary Morgan FBA**, the British Academy's Vice-President (Publications). She is also a member of the Strategy Board for 'The Academic Book of the Future' project, which is funded by the AHRC in collaboration with the British Library.

What is the fate of the academic book: is it doomed to die or does it have a new lease of life? Early career scholars suggest that the life-form of the monograph remains vital to them – but the reasons are worth teasing out, and despite e-publishing the form such books could take remains to be fully explored.

In an illuminating series of interviews, scholars at the British Academy's Early Career Research Showcase event on 9 October 2015 told us why the book is not going to die just yet. They spoke about the continuing importance of the academic monograph on deeply personal grounds. The monograph is the place where they create the space of their own scholarship, and in placing their name on it like a flag, they mark out that territory as theirs. A monograph, particularly the first one, gives a scholar their identity in their field.

Monographs are beloved of such scholars (particularly in the humanities

and social sciences where monographs matter), not just as identity objects within their community, but because they are places where you can develop and achieve big things: produce accounts of depth as well as scope and detail. But their love of the monograph is not just intellectual; there is a sure attachment to the importance of the physical object. There remains strong commitment to print monographs on cognitive grounds, and on efficiency grounds: usage creates a degree of focus and engagement not achievable on screen reading. But there are equally aesthetic and tactile grounds: scholars love turning pages – back and forth, they love the sense of there being a whole book to read, they love the objects themselves.

Academics coming into the profession continue to want monographs and want printed monographs as a shared commitment to scholarship of great quality. The monograph is here to stay, with a healthy community of rising star producers and of publishers to publish them. That is why the academic book will not just go away.

But equally, new forms of publishing have prompted reflections on the things that are not monographs, and on alternative ways of getting serious ideas to travel well into and across the community. One of the obvious issues is length – monographs are a long form, but the very short forms of blogs and intermediate forms of journal articles leave many spaces. For example, will half-monographs become an established genre under a new label? Digital modes of publishing have also opened up a wider range of writing possibilities which are complementary in many respects, and early career scholars will be looking for mutual dependence rather than independence.

Yet these ideas sit within existing possibilities and it is in fact much more difficult to rethink the monographic book than it seems. For my first post-PhD research work on late 19th-century America economics, I wanted

to write a monograph with a circular form. I imagined a book that was like a rolling card index system – you could start at any chapter and read chapters in any order. There would be no introduction and no conclusion, for there was no overall argument separately from the substantive chapters, and the linear order of chapters was not just unimportant, but positively to be denied. It was a jigsaw-making project not a sequence-making project. Of course this could not work; it might work more easily in our digital world. But the reflection on digital possibilities from one Academy-supported scholar whose work is based on digital modelling of the city-scape of Ancient Rome¹ suggests that we have not really solved the relatively simple problem of order of presentation, let alone figured out new fully digital forms of reporting scholarship that are equivalent to the print-monograph in scope and depth, for his work is visually- and digitally-led, not writing- and print-led. His project exemplifies the challenge of the academic book of the future in the most immediate and rigorous form: the project has the right depth and scope to be a monograph, but how can this be a book?

This all suggests that the real benefits of digital technology are not yet realised in digital monographs. E-print and paper print can be seen as complementary rather than different forms, but the form remains the same. Experiments with monographs and with digital technology are both required to help us rethink what counts as a monograph without losing that important sense of identity-fixing the monograph carries with it, and while still enabling a scholar to grapple successfully with materials of scope and depth.

1. See Matthew Nicholls, 'Digital visualisation: Ancient Rome, and beyond' in this issue of the *British Academy Review*.

This article was originally written for the British Academy Blog, <http://blog.britac.ac.uk>

Digital visualisation: Ancient Rome, and beyond

MATTHEW NICHOLLS



Figure 1
An overview of Matthew Nicholls' model of ancient Rome, from the south.

Dr Matthew Nicholls is Associate Professor in Classics at the University of Reading. He has been awarded a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award (BARSEA) for his project on 'Digital Visualisation in the Humanities'. On 9 October 2015, he attended the British Academy Early Career Research Showcase event to give a presentation of his own digital visualisation of Ancient Rome, and he spoke to the *British Academy Review* about his work.

What is your Virtual Rome model, and what is it trying to do?

I have recreated the city of Rome as it appeared in the early 4th century AD. It is a 3D architectural model of the city (Figure 1). It is a fully explorable digital artefact,

so you can move cameras round it, fly through it, create renders of individual buildings or of the entire city from any angle, any sun position, any altitude, all the way from a 'God's eye view' down to street level. It is aiming to be a comprehensive urban model of the entire city. It grew out of individual buildings that I was making to illustrate my research. It became a teaching tool that my university supported, very generously. It is becoming, again, a research project as I start to investigate sight lines and illumination within the city, and the way the topography and the monuments interact with one another – research questions that are made possible by having made a model of the entire city.

The BARSEA project I am currently running with the British Academy's funding is to talk about digital visualisation in humanities disciplines more broadly,



Figure 2
The Theatre of Marcellus in Rome, in which the Saecular Games took place, showing the sunlight at 9am on a June morning.

and to try to link up what I am doing with what I suspect a lot of people at my career stage are doing in their own disciplines around the place.

What does this approach bring that is transformative?

Having the whole city as a navigable entity, from way up in the air down to ground level, certainly taught me a lot about the city of Rome, and it is helping my students learn more about the city of Rome too. I really like how this sort of work brings research and teaching together. The model is created as a teaching tool, and I have student assistants working on it. But it is also a research tool which enables you to do things that you could not do otherwise.

At the moment I am working on a study where we have the timings for a certain set of theatrical games in Augustan Rome. We can set up the model for those times and dates, and look at what the sun is doing in the theatres. It turns out that the sun is on the stage during the hour of the Saecular Games that Augustus set up (Figure 2). That was a nice finding.

I am also working with a colleague at Durham on an article about sight lines. How do buildings present themselves from different points in the city? If you are standing close up, can you tell it is a bath house? If you move further away, can you still tell it is a bath house?

It is very difficult to think of how you would do that without this kind of immersive digital model.

One of the fun things is that just building the model suggests these questions. I didn't necessarily have these ideas in mind specifically when I set out. But, having created this, we can now see the opportunities, and there is a lot of interesting work to be done.

To study the history of a place, traditionally one has had to visit it oneself to witness the local conditions. Does digital modelling mean that one no longer has to visit what is left of a site, but can now experience it as it was through the 3D reconstruction?

I hope not. I think visiting these sites is essential. I take students and others to Rome pretty much annually. I have always regarded going to see these places as an essential part, and frankly a fun part, of the discipline that we do. So, no, it doesn't stop people doing that.

I think this offers a supplement to that. When we visit a site, what to an expert eye might be very revealing, might to the first-year undergraduate look like a disappointing heap of stones. Something that can help the student move on from that initial impression to an understanding how those pieces once fitted together is a helpful supplement to that experience of visiting in person. It is not a replacement.



Figure 3
Digital visualisation of the Colosseum and the Arch of Constantine in Rome.

And I would never make the claim that what I have created is so accurate and so reliable that it just erases the need to consider for yourself the faults, variances or doubts in what I have created. Many different interpretations are possible; mine is just one of them. So you should go and see and think for yourself.

How many conjectures have you had to make in constructing your 3D model?

Millions, literally millions. There are about 4 or 5 billion separate polygons – different faces – in the model, and each of those is the result of a series of mouse clicks, and each mouse click is an educated guess.

Any city-wide model is going to have buildings we know a lot about, like the Colosseum (Figure 3), which we can reconstruct pretty accurately because half of it is still there, ancient writers talked about it, it is on coins, etc. – a very well attested building.

There will also be miles and miles of back streets full of *insula* blocks, people's flats, warehouses, restaurants, little bath houses and mini piazzas, which we know sometimes very little about, sometimes literally nothing about. You can't make a city model without including all of that, because that is the texture and in-fill and background and bones of the city. But to put it in, you have to make guesses – I hope educated guesses, based on reasonable comparanda and wide reading, looking at all

the available evidence and drawing the dots – but there is a lot of conjecture.

In digital modelling, unlike perhaps in some other forms of reconstruction, you can differentially colour it, or you can turn bits of it on and off. You can maybe turn off all the bits you are uncertain about; or perhaps turn on all the bits that are based on one kind of evidence, for example Septimius Severus' marble map of Ancient Rome which accounts for maybe 10-15 per cent of what is in my model. By highlighting bits or making them disappear, you can express doubt and variance to an extent.

And pictures are not enough by themselves, because they might make a false claim: they might try to present themselves as authentic and completely reliable, when they are just an act of interpretation. So having alongside them some sort of written commentary for scholarly readers – saying 'This stuff I am pretty sure about. This stuff I am less sure about' – is an essential aid to the usefulness of such a creation. The ways in which reconstructors can create and present these differential views, or the research data and metadata underlying a digital reconstruction, is something that we're still working out, and that I am sure will continue to develop.

Are there insights for other Roman sites?

In terms of how the city works, how the streetscape works,

yes. One of the things that I am finding increasingly interesting is how the monuments of Rome exist in a sort of dialogue with the urban maze around them, and how they either do or do not address the mazy, windy organic streets. There are many cities in the ancient world that are like that, and there are others that are on a grid plan, where the monuments might be more rationally articulated within the urban framework. So, yes, I think there is work to be done in comparing Rome to other places, in terms of this ability to put yourself at Roman's eye view and walk around within the city-scape.

Are there public engagement benefits?

Yes. I am doing a lot of public-facing work with it, a great deal – schools talks and museum talks all the time. I have licensed it a few times now for television documentaries and there have been some interesting results. I am licensing it at the moment for a computer game studio to make a walkaround version of Rome which will be the basis for a game. I am making it into a MOOC, a 'massive open online course', at my university. It has been the basis of popular publications in magazines and books already, and I am writing a book that will be aimed at sixth-formers, undergraduates and the general public. So it has a lot of public-facing application.

I do think that digital visualisation is a very convenient way of engaging the public with ancient history, because people are used to documentaries that do this sort of thing, and movies. Our students now are digital natives and they expect 3D graphics to be part of their experience of the ancient world.

Do academics yet expect 3D graphics to be part of their work?

It is becoming increasingly current. There are a number of research projects, and have actually been for some years, that are using 3D visualisation either as part of their public engagement work or more profoundly as part of their research agenda. As part of my BARSEA work, I am going round speaking to these people. I think what is new is that, 10-15 years ago, this was the preserve of specialists: academics would engage a CAD (computer-assisted design) person to do the 3D visualisation for them. That is still the pattern generally, but I have made my model of Rome myself.

Through my BARSEA award I have had the chance to

make contact with others working on similar or complementary projects. For example, I've been in contact with: a team in Berlin who are working on a reconstruction of the Roman forum; a project making reconstructions of archaeological sites in Iran that sustains itself by selling educational DVDs; studios who work on reconstruction for commercial clients like broadcasters and publishers; and other academic projects in the UK and overseas. These teams have fairly disparate aims and workflows, and are pursuing different goals across different disciplines: some are inside the academic world, some are in the commercial world. But it was interesting to discover the threads of connection between them. Questions I have faced as a single researcher working in particular period and academic discipline have in different forms been faced by all these projects – questions like the use of colour and texture, dealing with hardware and software limitations, and resolving the tensions between, say, attractive photorealism and documentable accuracy. The solutions arrived at from different directions by these projects have been very interesting and informative.

I think the software is becoming easy enough, and the functionality of the hardware and software versatile and sophisticated enough that it will increasingly be the case that individual researchers or small teams of researchers will be able to acquire within themselves the skills needed to do at least simple visualisation. This is part of the rationale behind my BARSEA project. I think more people should be doing this stuff. It is not that hard, so I think it will become more common. To that end, I have also been able to use my BARSEA award to host a workshop introducing the basics of digital modelling software to humanities researchers, from graduate students to established academics. Those attending were from a wide variety of disciplinary and institutional backgrounds and will, I hope, take back to their own work a sense of the research, outreach and teaching possibilities afforded by digital modelling.

This interview was recorded as part of the British Academy's contribution to Academic Book Week 2015.



For an audio recording of it, including parts not printed here, go to www.britishacademy.ac.uk/digitalvisualisation/

Five ways in which the medieval is relevant today

CONOR KOSTICK

Dr Conor Kostick is Marie Curie Research Fellow in the Department of History at the University of Nottingham. In 2015 he received a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award for his project on 'Making the Medieval Relevant'.

The British Academy's Rising Star Engagement Award allowed me to organise a conference to which I invited speakers whose work demonstrates the continuing importance of research into the medieval period for today.¹ Here are five of the case studies that we discussed.

Understanding societal resilience

Dr Daniel Curtis is a postdoctoral researcher on a European Research Council project led by Professor Bas van Bavel, entitled 'Coordinating for Life: Success and Failure of Western European Societies in Coping with Rural Hazards and Disasters, 1300–1800'. He spoke about the project and the value of medieval economic history.

When we see parts of Europe overwhelmed by major floods, or stricken by droughts, it is a reminder that communities are regularly confronted with major hazards, which sometimes have disastrous effects. Some societies are successful in preventing these effects and buffering threats, or they recover quickly, while others suffer various levels of collapse. Why is this?

Modern wealth and technology mean we are far better positioned than our predecessors to cope with a societal challenge such as extreme weather. But even today, hazards and disasters are a tough test for the organisational capacities of a society, both in mitigation and recovery.

The 'Coordinating for Life' project uses historical experience to investigate a key element in societal resilience, namely the way that the exchange, allocation and use of resources take place. It aims to explain why some

1. 'Making the medieval relevant: Connecting early-career researchers studying 400-1500' was held at the University of Nottingham on 14-15 November 2015.

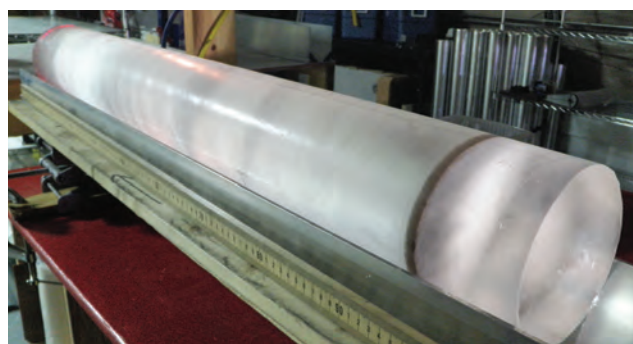


Figure 1
Layers of ash in ice cores provide evidence of past volcanic eruptions. (In this example from the West Antarctic Ice Sheet Divide, the ash was laid down approximately 21,000 years ago.) Photo: Heidi Roop, National Science Foundation.

societies do well in preventing or remedying disasters through these institutional arrangements, and others do not. The idea is to use history as a laboratory in which relevant comparisons can be found and independent variables can be limited. The same kind of shock can be examined, but in regions where there were different outcomes.

Flooding provides highly relevant case studies – with regions such as Frisia (modern day Netherlands, north of the Rhine) learning to adapt to cope with severe storms that could lead to flood events such as that of 26 December 838, which killed 2,437 people.

The project aims to get away from a fascination with the 'special' – witch hunts, burning of Jews, massive riots, etc. – and instead ask why, when presented with the same exogenous shock, societies did not descend into social disorder, chaos and hatred.

Calibrating ice-cores

My own research into past medieval weather has proved of value in resolving discrepancies in ice-core chronologies. This is important, because ice-cores have so much to tell us about past climate, not least in regard to years when major volcanic eruptions have taken place (Figure 1). If we can date such years with precision, we

can then investigate the impact of volcanoes on past societies (Figure 2) – and be warned about our own future in this regard.

Having been interested in the question of whether really harsh environmental circumstances contributed to the mass emigratory movements that were the first two Crusades (1096 and 1147), I had begun to search medieval sources for evidence of extreme weather events – such as droughts, floods and hurricanes.² In time, I compiled thousands of observations from monks, historians, hagiographers, etc.

Then in 2014, an ice-core team led by Dr Michael Sigl got in touch. They had some great chemical analysis of ice layers going back thousands of years. But the problem was one of calibration in order to date those layers. Their own findings suggested that the current standard ice-core chronologies were incorrect by up to seven years for dates reaching back to before c.1250. Could I help?

I had several historical accounts of probable volcanic dust effects (in addition to explicit accounts of the eruption of Vesuvius), descriptions of pale blue suns, or months where the sun was weak, or severe drops in temperature. So, without knowing the dates that the ice core team was interested in, I supplied them with my data and we found we had a match.³

Once the ice-cores are calibrated in this way and the seven-year errors eliminated, those earlier authors, like Professor Michael McCormick, who had conjectured that volcanic climate forcing may have had a profound affect on human societies, can be seen to have been right. And the path is now much clearer for continuing the exploration of the interaction between extreme climate events and society.

Public interest

The public imagination can turn towards matters medieval in an enthusiastic fashion, and this was demonstrated in 2013 with the huge response to the discovery of the remains of King Richard III. So I invited Dr Turi King, geneticist on the University of Leicester project, to talk about the discovery of the body, its identification and the impact of the discovery.

Two segments of our DNA have a very simple pattern of inheritance: both mitochondrial DNA and the Y-chromosome are copied and passed down virtually unchanged down through the generations, and therefore could be used for DNA identification purposes. Mitochondrial DNA is passed down through the female line, and the Y-chromosome through the male line. So to get a DNA match that could confirm the identity of the skeleton found in the car park in Leicester, individuals related to Richard III through an all-female line or an all-male line had to be found who could be used as comparators for the DNA analysis.

2. This data became much richer thanks to funding from a Nottingham Advanced Research Fellowship, a Marie Curie Career Integration Grant, and the advice of my intellectual collaborator, Dr Francis Ludlow.

3. See M. Sigl *et al.*, 'Timing and climate forcing of volcanic eruptions for the past 2,500 years', *Nature*, 523 (July 2015), 543–549.



Figure 2
Mount Rinjani, on the Indonesian island of Lombok, may have been the volcano that erupted in the mid-13th century causing 'a year without summer'. Photo: Masseur64 (Wikimedia Commons).

Richard had no direct descendants, so the team went up from Richard to his great-great-grandfather, Edward III, and then looked for family members from lines that extended down through the Beauforts. The team had a lead from the start: a direct descendant of the female line had earlier been identified, and their own work identified a second female descendant. It was the match between the mitochondrial DNA of these two persons with the skeleton that was the strongest evidence that the body was indeed that of Richard.

The Y-chromosome goes down through the male line, and here the DNA told a different story. There was no match between the DNA of Richard and the current male descendants, which indicates that a 'false paternity' event (i.e. the biological father was not the man whom the sources indicate was the father) took place somewhere in the 19 links between Edward III and his descendants today.

DNA analysis was also able to show that Richard III had blue eyes and, in his early years, fair hair.

The public impact of this discovery was incredible. One measure of the interest was that when, in March 2015, the coffin of the king was displayed in Leicester Cathedral before being reinterred, people queued for up to four hours to see it. More than 35,000 people lined the route of the cortege as it travelled through Leicestershire and then back into the city for a service at the cathedral.⁴

Putting disability in context

Dr Christina Lee lectures on Viking Studies at the University of Nottingham. Her research is focused on disease and disability in the early medieval period. At the conference, she examined the connections between modern perceptions of disability and those of our Anglo-Saxon predecessors, beginning with an outline of five

4. On 12 March 2015, the British Academy held a public event entitled 'The Skeleton in the Car Park: Richard III and the legacy of his re-discovery' to explore the wide-ranging impact of the discovery and its ramifications for disciplines as diverse as archaeology, history, literature and drama. A video of the event can be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/skeleton

contemporary disability models: medical (disability is a biological matter); moral (it is a failing); social ('disability' is a concept constructed by society); religious; and 'the Supercrip' (disability brings heroism).

The Christian officials in the world of the Anglo-Saxons considered people with disabilities to be significant, mainly in the context of the healing value of prayer, shrines and relics. Lee pointed out, however, that this makes it difficult to understand the perception of disability more generally in society. If we base our understanding simply on reading Anglo-Saxon texts, then the difficulty is that so many of them are framed in this healing context and draw on Biblical antecedents.

Archaeology is therefore crucial to gaining a better understanding of the subject, despite the challenges of uncovering the presence of diseases based on skeletal remains. There is no evidence to indicate that the impaired were excluded from Anglo-Saxon society. There are burials that demonstrate care for those we might consider as having a disability. This is consistent with the Anglo-Saxon belief that it was positive to experience disability, as a reminder of the importance of avoiding eternal suffering.

Attitudes to disability might also have been affected by social status in the Early Middle Ages. Law codes imply that persons of elite backgrounds with disabilities were treated more favourably than those from poor backgrounds. Gender, too, might well have been significant here. The legal responsibilities of a male in the period included being able to swear an oath and be witness. Deafness, or being mute, or similar conditions would exclude males from the legal process, but would not necessarily impact on the role played by women: Lee suggested that what was disabling to men in the Anglo-Saxon period may not have been disabling to women.

What this research allows us to do is to take a step away from our own perceptions of disability, and appreciate that the 'normal' / 'not normal' dichotomy, which is extremely prevalent when discussing disability, is in fact a reflection of a particular historical moment and not a universal feature of all societies.

Discovering a treatment for MRSA

One of the greatest challenges facing humanity today is the emergence of bacteria with resistance to antibiotics. All the gains of modern medicine are under threat, according to the World Health Organization. One way forward might be to look again at the medicinal practices of the medieval world. Why? Because although they were ignorant of so much of modern theory, it seems that centuries of practice by medieval doctors arrived at treatments for infections that were effective. This is the conclusion of Dr Freya Harrison and her microbiologist

colleagues at the University of Nottingham.

Dr Harrison tested an eye salve described in the 10th-century Anglo-Saxon *Bald's Leechbook*:

Take cropleek and garlic, of both equal quantities, pound them well together, take wine and bullocks' gall, of both equal quantities, mix with the leek, put this then into a brazen vessel, let it stand nine days in the brass vessel, wring out through a cloth and clear it well, put it into a horn, and about night time apply it with a feather to the eye.

A major challenge in reproducing the recipe was in sourcing authentic ingredients. Modern crop varieties of leek and garlic were used, despite the fact it is quite likely they are somewhat different to the medieval versions. For the wine, the team used an organic vintage from a historic English vineyard. Squares of brass sheet (later determined not to effect the outcomes) were inserted to simulate the presence of the brass vessel. Commercially available cow's bile salts (sold as a supplement for people who have had their gall bladders removed) were used for the 'bullocks' gall'.

The first indication that the recipe might have some validity was that after nine days the mixture had killed all the soil bacteria introduced by the leek and garlic.

Having made three batches of salve, the team applied it to cultures of three commonly found and hard to treat bacteria, *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Staphylococcus epidermidis* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, both in synthetic wounds and in infected wounds in mice. The results were then compared to a control treatment using the same recipe, but without the vegetable compounds. On their own, the ingredients had no measureable effect. But when combined, the mixture was startlingly effective: only about one in a thousand bacteria survived application (which makes the salve as effective as the current antibiotic of choice for treating MRSA).

Moreover, the combination of ingredients was far more effective after nine days, rather than immediately. In other words, the information in the recipe was crucial and accurate.

The team are now seeking funding to deepen our understanding of exactly how this medicine works, and to identify and test a whole new body of medieval medical recipes.

Network

The result of the British Academy-supported weekend is a new network of early career medievalists, looking to highlight the relevance of their own work and to collaborate in new projects. There is a JISCMail account for the group, and readers interested in joining it are welcome to contact me (conor.kostick@nottingham.ac.uk).

Rewrite the headlines!

Helping young people evaluate how academic research is reported in the media

ALAN GOW and SINEAD RHODES

Dr Alan Gow, is Associate Professor in Psychology at Heriot-Watt University. He received a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award that helped launch a competition designed to engage young people in evaluating the coverage of research in the media. His project colleague, Dr Sinead Rhodes, is a Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Strathclyde.

Ever wondered how findings go from a research lab to headline news?

When we pick up a newspaper or read news stories online, we hope that the reporting is fair and accurate. Many times it is, but sometimes the reporter, the press officer or even the researcher can get it wrong! With stories based on research findings there are a few potential weak points in the process where inaccuracies can sneak in.

With that, 'Rewrite the Headlines', a new competition for schoolchildren and undergraduates to explore how research is discussed in the media, was launched in August 2015. A key aim of the initiative was to help young people get a better understanding of the journey from 'lab to headline', so they can more confidently judge any research stories they might come across. Rewrite the Headlines was funded by a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award, and here we describe some of the ideas behind the competition and how it engaged young people across Scotland.

The ethos behind the competition

The critical consumption of research reported in the media is an important skill, and one which needs to be encouraged early. Rewrite the Headlines was therefore proposed as a competition to engage young people in evaluating research reported in the media, helping them to understand the potential weak points in the pipeline between research and headline, and in particular, to identify the responsibilities of both researchers and



Dr Alan Gow gave a presentation about his British Academy-supported project at the British Academy Early Career Research Showcase event held on 9 October 2015.

journalists in the process of knowledge dissemination. A key aim of the competition was to raise awareness of – and engage young people in – research that may have an impact on their lives.

The target audiences for the initiative were primary schoolchildren (in primaries 5 to 7) and university undergraduate students. While the overall aim was the same, the approaches taken for the two audiences obviously differed. But before I describe those approaches, let me give some of the background to the group who are behind the competition.

First there was a blog

The competition was co-ordinated within the context of 'Research the Headlines', a multidisciplinary blog addressing how research is reported in the media.¹ It was developed and launched in August 2013 by members of the Royal Society of Edinburgh's Young Academy of Scotland.² The blog arose from discussions among members about how best to address issues of communication between researchers and the media and, more importantly, how to engage members of the public in

1. <http://researchtheheadlines.org/>
2. www.youngacademyofscotland.org.uk/



Figure 1
Dr Alan Gow leads a primary school workshop about the 'Rewrite the Headlines' competition, in November 2015.

exploring research in the media.

On developing the ideas behind Research the Headlines, Dr Sinead Rhodes (founder and current Co-Chair) has said: 'New findings from detailed research studies often form the basis of media reports. But how confident are people in assessing the science and methods that sit behind the latest headline, such as the absolute risk of eating red meat? Accessing the original research papers might be difficult or in some cases costly, and where people are able to get hold of the source material, they may find it inaccessible given the specialist language and methods used.'

The blog was very clearly inspired by the excellent work of the NHS Choices 'Behind the Headlines' team, but develops this in two distinct ways. Research the Headlines moves beyond a focus on health-related stories. This is possible because the blog benefits from contributions by researchers and professionals spanning the diverse range of backgrounds within the Young Academy of Scotland – from psychology and history to astronomy and social policy. For example, among the most popular posts from 2015 were a piece discussing popular media myths around the refugee crisis across Europe, another giving some insight into the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano eruption, and another exploring whether gender reassignment might be seen to have an impact on cognitive abilities.

In the standard posts, our Research the Headlines contributors take recent media coverage of research as a starting point, allowing readers to reach a better understanding of what was really done, and what it might mean for them, from an expert but independent position.

The second way in which Research the Headlines complements existing blogs such as Behind the Headlines is its broader educational focus. For example, special series have included 'How to "Research the Headlines"', giving 10 top tips to readers about what to look for in the media reporting of new research, and 'Talking Headlines', where we ask high-profile researchers, journalists or bloggers to give an insight into what goes on behind the headlines.

Since its launch, the blog activity has grown steadily, and has attracted interest from the NHS Choices team, Sense about Science, and the Science Media Centre. For example, the NHS now name and link to Research the Headlines as 'Editor's pick of the blogs' on some of their own health posts. The blog has also just been shortlisted in the 2016 UK Blog Awards, with the winners to be announced in April. However, it was always the group's intention to build on the successful foundation of the blog to engage relevant audiences more directly. And so the Rewrite the Headlines competition was conceived.

'Don't stop at the headline'

For the primary school audience, the competition had a simple underlying message: 'Don't stop at the headline'. This was our first tip in the How to 'Research the Headlines' series, and while it may seem obvious, the tip essentially highlights a very important issue. Media coverage of research can often be fair and accurate, but the number of times the headline doesn't match the content or tone of the piece remains problematic. This is particularly the case where the headlines are intentionally misleading – to generate traffic, or to provoke an immediate comment or response before the article has been read fully. The competition was therefore targeted at children in the upper years of primary school (primaries 5-7), as it was felt they represented a key age to begin exploring the critical consumption of media, and how stories are (mostly) based on original sources.

For the schools that registered to participate, Research the Headlines contributors (or our colleagues from the Young Academy of Scotland or from universities across Scotland), ran a short workshop with the classes (Figure 1). The schools workshops explored what research is, where it comes from and why understanding new findings might be important, before showing how those often very specialist descriptions get translated into news stories. Through examples, the workshops took the children from the headline, and what that might



Figure 2
Dr Alan Gow (far left) and Dr Sinead Rhodes (far right) with the winners of the Rewrite the Headlines school competition – St Roch’s Primary and Hearing Impaired School, Glasgow.

initially suggest, to seeing how reading more of the story might change that initial impression. For each example, the children were then asked to ‘rewrite the headlines’ to represent more accurately the research being reported.

What was particularly important to the group was that the workshop was not to be designed to criticise journalists or the media unfairly. The sessions included news stories where the headlines were indeed exaggerated, but other examples highlighted fair reporting based on flawed research.

After the workshop, teachers were given some direction on how to identify their own news story of interest related to recent research output and have the class devise their more accurate headline. These new headlines were then accompanied by a short description of why the class felt their headline was a clearer account of the story, with both headline and text going to our judging panel of members of the Young Academy of Scotland.

When the competition opened, 96 schools registered their interest, and in many cases they signed up multiple classes. This represented a potential audience of over 5,000 schoolchildren. While it wasn’t possible to reach every school, our contributors crossed the country, from the Scottish Borders to the Highlands and Islands. Overall, workshops were hosted in over 80 schools. To ensure no one need miss out, a short video was also prepared to allow teachers to run their own workshops (accompanied by a fuller script). The materials remain available on the competition website for anyone interested in exploring the ideas further.³

Engaging with students

While the principal focus for the first year of the competition was on children of primary school age, Rewrite

the Headlines was also targeted at university undergraduate students. Students represent a key demographic that should be able to apply their critical skills to explore how their subject is presented in the media.

The student competition was self-guided, using materials available on the website (again, these are freely available for others to use, e.g. for teaching). The submissions for the student competition were blogs in the style of the standard Research the Headlines posts, where a news story and its associated research paper are discussed, and the good, bad (and ugly) are highlighted. As with the schools competition, it was important to highlight that good reporting could and should be covered. Research the Headlines regularly champions good reporting, and so students were advised that their pieces could be positive or negative in appraising the research and/or media reporting, but their approach needed to be justified by the source material.

And the winner is...

On 28 January 2016, the Research the Headlines team held a special event to reveal the winners of the Rewrite the Headlines competition. The winning school was St Roch’s Primary and Hearing Impaired School in Glasgow (Figure 2). The school’s entry had turned the recent headline ‘Processed meats do cause cancer – WHO’, into ‘Eating processed meat slightly increases risk of cancer’. The research story was one that had generated a lot of interest and confusion when originally released, and the judges were impressed with how the class cleverly explained the concept of risk, and had worked out that eating processed meat is associated with an enhanced risk of one extra person per 100.

In the student competition, prizes were awarded across a number of categories, including Social Science (Figure 3), History, and Social Policy. This last prize was awarded to David McElroy from Abertay University for

3. <http://researchtheheadlines.org/rewritetheheadlines/>

his blog entitled ‘How did *The Sun* work out that “1 in 5 Brit Muslims have sympathy for jihadis”?’ His piece was praised by the judges as ‘an engaging piece, clearly considering the audience and the Research the Headlines blogging style, with a good balance of evidence from the actual survey and analysis of the misrepresentation of findings in the newspaper article.’ Another entry in the Social Policy category – from Fraser Barker, a student at the University of Strathclyde – asked ‘Will a square jaw help Trump win in 2016?’, and was highly commended as ‘a timely piece, well written and presented’.

The overall student prize was from Abbey Wrathall, a student at the University of Edinburgh. In her blog entry entitled ‘So, should you wait until Monday to take your child to hospital?’, Abbey explored recent media coverage about whether weekend versus weekday hospital admissions might be associated with poorer outcomes. This topic is still very much in the news, and the judges recognised the importance of careful reporting on this, given that it might directly affect the choices people make.

Full details of all the winning and highly commended entries appear on the Research the Headlines blog.⁴

The next stage

The Research the Headlines team is grateful to the British Academy for funding the development of its new initiative, and has been overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of the school children and students who took part. As the competition wrapped, Sinead also added ‘Given the interest in Rewrite the Headlines, we’re exploring further opportunities to ensure it can become an annual event.’ In this first year of Rewrite the Headlines, the competition was naturally limited to Scotland given the resources available. However, the Research the Headlines team is seeking funding to allow the competition to grow in future years, not only geographically, but also potentially to other age groups – and with the inclusion of small homework exercises addressing some other How to ‘Research the Headlines’ tips, this could engage parents too. In achieving this, it is likely that a number of partner organisations will be involved, and we would welcome hearing from anyone interested in becoming more involved in those next stages.

The bottom line

A number of online and offline outlets provide information on – and foster debate around – topical issues. They range from broadcast and traditional print media to alternative information sources, including blogs and discussions on social media platforms. The extent to

4. <http://researchtheheadlines.org/2016/01/29/rewrite-the-headlines-and-the-winner-is/>



Figure 3
Dr Alan Gow and Dr Sinead Rhodes with (centre) Sarah Keith of University of Aberdeen, who won the undergraduate subject prize in Social Science for her blog entitled ‘Can films really boost your memory?’

which these outlets engage with evidence on such issues varies greatly, as does the quality and interpretation of such evidence. While freedom of speech allows for this plurality of information sources to exist, it is ever more important that consumers are able to engage with it in a critical manner.

Both Research the Headlines and our new Rewrite the Headlines initiative are specifically designed to facilitate that engagement, in a positive and constructive manner. Critical engagement with the media, research and the evidence generated from it is a centrally important skill. Training in this should come as early as possible, and be reinforced throughout the education process, beginning in the formative school years and continuing throughout further and higher education. Educating and training the public to be more critical consumers of information is something that academics and researchers should be involved in. And we hope that you’ll be hearing more from our attempts to ‘rewrite the headlines’ in the future.

‘Rewrite the Headlines’ is an initiative of ‘Research the Headlines’, jointly led by Dr Sinead Rhodes and Dr Alan Gow. The competition is supported by a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award to Dr Gow, with additional funding from the University of Strathclyde to Dr Rhodes. Research the Headlines is a working group of the Royal Society of Edinburgh Young Academy of Scotland.

All enquiries relating to Rewrite the Headlines should be directed to rewritetheheadlines@youngacademyofscotland.org.uk

‘Big Society’, ‘good culture’, and aspiration

MATTHEW JOHNSON

Dr Matthew Johnson is Lecturer in Politics at Lancaster University. He was a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow from 2011 to 2014. He currently holds a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award. His project explores social and political concepts through an innovative form of community-oriented participatory research.

With the election in May 2015 of the first Conservative majority Government since 1992, attention is firmly fixed on new rounds of austerity. Gone are the references to the ‘well-being agenda’ and claims of social progress being devolved to civil society through ‘Big Society’. The Government’s ideological commitment to a stripping back of the state, the fetishisation of certain forms of life, and the reluctance to uphold and promote broader social goods, have highlighted the need for a more thorough examination of the value of grounding public policy in ‘good culture’.

The notion of ‘good culture’, initially developed during my British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship, is

that people’s culture ought to promote well-being in their particular circumstances. Culture, in this sense, consists of the shared understandings that shape institutions in any human group. These institutions can include, at the smallest level, family systems, and at the largest level, international political and economic systems. Societies uphold ‘good culture’ through commitment to three key values – equality, solidarity and non-domination – which check and balance each other and other values. This commitment can look very different when realised in different societies, but must underpin whatever other ends and whichever other values the societies pursue. Without equality, people develop pathologies associated with generalised feelings of superiority or inferiority; without solidarity, people are alienated from one another and are unable effectively to co-operate empathically; and, without non-domination, people are subject to the arbitrary will of others. In addition, culture must be sustainable and, while upholding key values, people must not fetishise particular goods that stand in the way of responses to changing circumstances.

This idea has been examined in a participatory project



Figure 1
Carl Burton (left) and Fiona Rowley (right) from Ashington, at a cultural awareness event in Queensland, together with Paul Craft, an Aboriginal Cultural Facilitator Educator. In March 2015, the group of participants from Ashington visited Brisbane, where they shadowed their Aboriginal counterparts in their professional and social lives, visiting organisations and conducting research on a range of topics of importance to the communities.



Figure 2
Matthew Johnson (left, author of this article) with two of the co-researchers, Archie Moore (middle) and Matt Calder (right), at the exhibition ‘Relocating Land, Memory and Place: A Cross-Cultural Exchange’, at System Gallery in Newcastle, in June 2015. The exhibition sought to examine the two artists’ respective memories of clay and the land. Moore sought to articulate his experiences of life as an Aboriginal Australian in an often hostile rural Queensland town, Tara, while Calder sought to articulate his experiences of engaging with the Northumbrian landscape.

involving academics and non-academic community co-researchers from two groups that have suffered disproportionately in their respective countries in recent times: people from Ashington, Northumberland, which has seen its traditional source of livelihood decline in the wake of the dissolution of the mining industry; and people from Aboriginal Australian communities, which have seen their traditional lives destroyed during colonialism.

Ten community co-researchers, five from Ashington and five from Brisbane, spent two years developing relationships with one another in advance of one-month embedded visits to each other's communities in mid-2015. During these exchanges, the co-researchers lived in their counterparts' communities, shadowed their hosts in their workplaces and social environments, and conducted research on their (often overlapping) areas of interest: relationships, employment, health, education, environment and arts (Figures 1 and 2). The groups engaged in interviews, focus groups, daily group meetings and weekly seminars as they developed their ideas. At the end of the visit to Ashington in June 2015, the co-researchers sought to explain the lives of their families and communities within the context of their deep history during a conference at Lancaster University – funded through a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award – which aimed to outline and explore the potential value and application of participatory research. Academics from a range of backgrounds and disciplines participated in the contextualisation of the co-researchers' narratives at the event; and interviews, presentations and discussions were recorded on film during the production of two documentaries on the project by a filmmaker, Roger Appleton of Brightmoon Media. The documentaries and over 60 hours of other material accumulated in advance of, during and after the visits will form a YouTube archive of material (due for completion in early 2016) for use by communities and academics examining issues of disadvantage and alienation in a range of contexts.¹

The reason for focusing on the two communities as a means of exploring these broader issues is that they are both very different and surprisingly similar. While they are distinct in history, geography and culture, they both lived lives which, within serious environmental constraints, can be seen by any reasonable measure to be economically productive and self-sufficient. These lives were informed by similar commitments to values of solidarity, equality and non-domination, which shaped the ways in which the groups dealt with their collective challenges and which lie at the heart of my account of 'good culture'. People from both groups had their traditional ways of life interrupted by conflict with the state, and then faced unemployment and migration onto welfare programmes. This entailed a shift to predictable and damaging lives oriented around public programmes, often accompanied by significant and increasing micro-management of lives by external bodies, and the absence of social mobility. They both face cuts to welfare and

1. Further information about the project, about the two communities and about the participants can be found via <http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/good-culture/>



Figure 3
Bob Weatherall from Queensland (left), and Tony Bennett from Ashington (right).

social services at a time in which the private sector seems unable or unwilling to provide sufficient levels of employment. They have been subject to critical public discourses regarding welfare dependency, and both have seen programmes like Big Society come and go as political efforts to deal with social problems.

This project provided the groups with an opportunity, in environments they would not otherwise be able to work in, to explore these similarities and differences, in order to think collaboratively and politically about the ways in which their traditional cultural resources might assist them in dealing with challenges in the present. One key conclusion that has arisen out of this process concerns the ability of people from these communities to be 'successes', and the importance of those who are 'successes' in recognising a broader range of social goods themselves.

Big Society, autonomy and well-being

The project began by examining Big Society, since it was a key feature of Coalition policy in the UK, and had been endorsed by Noel Pearson, a prominent Aboriginal Australian political figure, in Australia. It alluded to ideas which many across the political spectrum would applaud: empowerment of communities, an emphasis on voluntary action, support for co-ops and alternative economic models, and transparent government. Yet, the concept itself was necessarily amorphous and directed at dealing solely with the symptoms, rather than causes, of social malaise. In essence, as Tony Bennett, a 51-year-old employment worker from Ashington (Figure 3), noted, 'it never sought to tackle "big societal" issues which were caused by the central tenets of the market economy.' Indeed, the Government's ideological reluctance to invest directly in communities meant that it opposed the sorts of social investments needed to promote 'well-being' in places of little interest to private investors – if, indeed, well-being could be equated with growth.

Looking towards an immediate future of further cuts, the project participants felt that this position has created a moral void which needs to be filled with a discourse of

'good culture' that deals with truly 'big societal' issues and makes the moral case for the priority of social goods and the value of socially-oriented investment.

When the well-being agenda was at its height in the last Parliament, it was apparent that there was no consensus on what constitutes well-being and how it should be promoted, nor even whether it can or should be a concern for Government – an issue which necessarily split the Coalition partners. Big Society assumed that people's well-being is linked to their autonomy, but some of the basic assumptions about that relationship proved problematic. Often, it was assumed that autonomy could be reduced to material or financial independence and that growth could increase autonomy by increasing material resources throughout society.

Well-being, in the tradition of Aristotle and expressed today by the likes of Professor Martha Nussbaum FBA,² assumes that people develop autonomy by nourishing socially their innate capabilities in order that they can live and do well. The community co-researchers, from both groups, believe that they operate on deeply ingrained cultural presumptions of the validity of this position. Like Nussbaum, they hold that, without supportive social, political and economic systems, people cannot develop healthy forms of, say, practical reason and imagination by which to navigate their lives, make good decisions and shape new creative, constructive and mutually beneficial relationships. As the groups suggested throughout many discussions and presentations, it is apparent that the dominant social, political and economic systems, around which Government policy is oriented today, often lack the culture required to support people in developing their capabilities. In particular, Mary Graham, an Aboriginal Traditional Owner (a person with legally established historical and cultural rights over a tract of land or 'country') from Southport, Australia (Figure 4), argued that Aboriginal people's recognition of three key values of equality or 'balance', solidarity and non-domination had historically enabled people to realise capabilities and ought to be deployed in the present to achieve the same end.

The problem the co-researchers highlighted with Big Society and similar programmes is that, by equating autonomy with financial independence, assuming that growth promotes independence, and believing that growth is best promoted by an unencumbered market, they do not adequately deal with causes of human suffering. They do not deal with a market society in which inequalities in resources and status are translated into social systems which lack concern for relationships, and which actually magnify domination through the often arbitrary patterns of the economy.

Collective action and change

In response to these deficits, the participants argued that the development of 'good culture' may involve all of the supposed goods identified by Big Society, but should

2. Martha Nussbaum is Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics, at the University of Chicago. She was elected a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy in 2008.



Figure 4
Mary Graham, Chairperson of Murri Mura Aboriginal Corporation.

not be limited by Big Society's concern for the market to a charitable or philanthropic afterthought. In line with elements of my original articulation of the position, 'good culture' means prioritising human well-being over abstract goods, interrogating the content of all institutions, and trying to shape them in such a way as to meet the particular needs of particular people in particular places. Outside of government, it may mean communities ignoring or rejecting government with regard to such diverse issues as economic activity and dealing with drug problems where the state endorses harmful policies, and gradually carving space for people to act autonomously, in the Aristotelian sense, as their reputation for collective activity develops.

This is what the Mondragon Corporation has done in the Basque Country, gradually achieving what governments in the UK and Australia purport to defend – the marginalisation of central government activity – in ways that contradict directly the advice those governments provide on economic and social development. By acting collectively and shaping a whole range of institutions, Basques have created an economic model grounded in solidarity, in which the interests of all members are deemed important and the fundamental equality among community members is recognised. This has actively prevented people being arbitrarily dominated by each other or by socially destructive economic behaviour.

The problem in the two communities which participated in the project is that they felt that their capacities to act collectively had been undermined historically through experiences of colonialism in Australia and the dissolution of collectivist organisations in the North, and that they have no ability to deal independently with processes over which they believe they have no control. The most tragic legacy of Big Society is that people most affected by politically-led processes now assume that community action is cleaning

up graffiti and dog mess, and that the 'big societal' issues can never be touched.

The associated problem with the loss of collective organisation and aspiration is that at least a significant proportion of people in the communities have not had the necessary supportive environment to develop the requisite capabilities for individual aspiration. Put simply, people struggle to take basic steps which other people in their respective societies, myself included, take for granted. People are alienated from – and lack the confidence to attend – educational institutions, are unable to access employment opportunities in their local area, and do not wish to move for fear of disrupting family relationships and the informal welfare services they provide. While we might criticise these individuals for their inertia or lack of individual aspiration, we have to appreciate that communities which have organised themselves collectively require a radical shift in their understandings in order to participate effectively. At a time in which they have been subject to radical changes in their way of life, it is to be expected that 'success' is more distant than for others.

Aspirations and work

The complication with this situation is that party politics makes supporting change ever more difficult. Most clearly, the post mortem to Labour's General Election calamity has been dominated by the claim that Ed Miliband failed 'aspirational' individuals who seek to get ahead. By this, people mean that Labour failed to demonstrate to ambitious go-getters that they would receive greater recognition and remuneration for their hard work. The election as party leader of Jeremy Corbyn hardly satisfies those concerns, with polls consistently suggesting that the electorate believes that Labour supports 'down and outs'. However, adhering to this vision of aspiration actually risks painting a pessimistic vision of Britain's future as one dominated by unhappy and self-destructive 'success' stories in mainstream society as well as unhappy and self-destructive 'failure' stories in the sort of communities engaged in this project.

In amongst the many benefits it provides, the market economy, the cultural core of modern societies, promotes some ways of life that appear self-destructive. In certain, but by no means all, cases, the notion of intrinsic value is swept away before instrumental concerns for recompense. Various studies of bankers have cited dissatisfaction with pay as a key site of discontent, despite the fact that the profession is remunerated relatively well in comparison to others. It could be argued that some 'aspirational' people not only deprive themselves of the work qualities which are intrinsically rewarding, such as realising higher capabilities and forming solid social bonds with others, they also enter into a never ending pursuit of a golden carrot. The more they work, the more money they expect to receive. Not only are they more unhappy because their lives are instrumentalised and because they have no time for activities which mitigate the suffering, they also confront the fact that no amount of money can compensate for unhappiness.

This form of alienation from intrinsic goods in work and social life not only challenges the equation of well-being with material independence, it also leads people to become pathologically disinclined to display generosity of spirit to others, particularly those who appear to have lives they envy, such as, counter-intuitively, those who are time rich, but money poor: the 'non-aspirational' welfare-dependent, such as those involved in this project. It was apparent that the least 'aspirational' community members in the project now feel themselves doubly punished for not receiving remuneration for individual aspiration in the first place and then for somehow stumbling upon a good – time – that the 'aspirational' seem to want or want others not to have in quantities greater than themselves. One co-researcher, an intelligent and sincere unemployed young man from Ashington, felt guilty when inactive, wished dearly to be active, but lacked the confidence and capabilities to take advantage of opportunities which appeared accessible to those, like me, with tertiary education and experience. In an earlier age, he would have had opportunities through the traditional industries, and would have known how to take advantage of those opportunities through the example of family members and friends who had gone before him. Now, he is alone.

The confusion over goods and the effect that this has on the most vulnerable in society is evidence of 'bad' culture – an affluent society condemning people it itself regards as 'successful' to affluent unhappiness, while denigrating its 'losers' out of, among other things, envy for a good to which the 'successful' choose not to have access. The successful have very little autonomy by pursuing success, while the losers have very little autonomy in part because the successful insist on their lives being the only lives worthy of recognition by the state. As a consequence, losers have the misery of being excluded from recognised economic activities compounded by being micromanaged for receiving tax money derived from the wages of 'successful' people. All of this means that they have even fewer of the capabilities needed to strike out from their communities and enter into mainstream society.

Politicians who call for aspiration to be rewarded run the risk of neglecting the broader problem facing a key constituency – the successful. In both the UK and Australia, there is a growing need for the successful to reflect upon their own lives in order to understand more fully the broader social goods which all people need to access.

Intrinsic goods and basic income

In general, the project has suggested the need for greater concern for intrinsic goods capable of restoring balance in people's lives by reducing the incentive for self-destructive careerism and supporting a wider and less individualistic range of lives to which people could aspire more easily.

One policy option is support for basic income, as endorsed by the Green Party. This controversial position holds that conditional welfare systems should be

abandoned and that all citizens should receive automatic regular payments from the state. This would provide a basic minimum for those outside the 'real' economy and a tax rebate for those within it.

This could create space for people to pursue ways of life independent of instrumental monetary reward, and to recognise that there is little point in working 90-hour weeks for well-paid unhappiness. The notion that people should have incentives to have miserable lives is replaced by the notion that people should pursue good lives of intrinsic worth and greater generosity of spirit. Monetary rewards can still exist and might be deployed in other areas where they are needed. For example, by removing the obligation of people to provide labour for little monetary reward, basic income may encourage better pay for essential, but dangerous or unsanitary careers, such as those in caring and cleaning, strengthening their status in the process. Perhaps the clearest consensus in the groups was belief that restoring balance through 'big societal' changes can help the aspirational as much as the presently 'non-aspirational'.

The benefits of engaging with communities in examining issues such as this are three-fold. (1) Academic ideas are applied, examined and revised by those who experience the subjects of the ideas in their everyday lives. (2) By engaging in formal research processes, previously alienated and apolitical community members garner practical experience of participation in academic and political forums. And (3), their contribution adds powerful substance to discussions which are all too often detached from real-world conditions. As such, while participation requires additional time and effort during the research phase, the findings and outcomes it can produce can help academics to address topics more dynamically, shaping impact throughout the process.

This is one of five articles in this issue of the *British Academy Review* that reveal how British Academy Rising Star Engagement Awards have enabled early career scholars to explore and share innovative methods of research and communication.

Identities in ‘Greater Senegambia’ and beyond

History and music in dialogue

TOBY GREEN



Dr Toby Green is Lecturer in Lusophone African History and Culture, at King’s College London. He was a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow between 2007 and 2010. He currently holds a British Academy Rising Star Engagement Award for his project on ‘Identities in Greater Senegambia and beyond: Interdisciplinary Approaches through History and Music in Dialogue’.

It was early in December 2014 when I heard of the ‘British Academy Rising Star Engagement Awards’ (BARSEA) scheme. It was the end of a long term, and making a swift grant application was not top of my to-do list. But the scheme offered the chance to develop something that no other scheme I knew of might allow me to work on, and so I decided to try and make the mid-January 2015 deadline. On 1 December 2014, alongside Lucy Durán of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), I had co-chaired an event featuring the Gambian scholar and musician Daniel Laeomahuma Jatta. Jatta had discussed the remarkable research he had conducted on the African roots of the New World banjo, which were to be found in the *akonting* instrument of the Jola people who now reside in Guinea-Bissau, Senegal and The Gambia. After the event, Durán and I had discussed the possibilities of building a more ambitious interdisciplinary project around the larger theme of identities and integration in the region on which we both work in West Africa, defined by the Senegalo-Guinean historian Boubakar Barry as ‘Greater Senegambia’.¹ A workshop supported through the BARSEA scheme would allow both public engagement and scholarly discourse to take shape around a key world region.

This is a region of West Africa with historically deep cultural and historical interconnections. The empire of Mali (*fl.* 1250-1470) integrated the cultures of many different peoples in one political space, and although political crises and pressures fragmented the space

Hunters travelling with *donsongoni* (‘hunters’ harps’) to a celebration of the hunters’ association in Bamako, Mali, showing the intersection of history and music in the past and the present. Photo: Lucy Durán.

1. B. Barry, *Senegambia and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge, 1998). The region is generally seen to encompass what are now the Republics of Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Senegal and The Gambia.

subsequently, there are many cultural commonalities. Cultural frameworks in music and performance, in traditions of oral histories and performances, and in rites of passage, provide many interconnections which make the artificial nation-state boundaries and present linguistic barriers seem all the more unfortunate. As a Gambian headteacher once said to me, the only languages which The Gambia does *not* share with its neighbour Senegal are the official languages of governance – the old colonial heritage of English and French. What Durán and I wanted to do, therefore, was to bring together people from across the region in a genuinely interdisciplinary framework to focus on the core of Greater Senegambian culture and its significance in the 21st century.

This seemed all the more urgent given that this is a region where perilous migration across the Sahara and the Mediterranean to the shadow economies of Europe is growing year on year. The villages of the hinterland are emptying, as everyone who conducts research there knows. Earlier in 2014, I had set off by road from Banjul in The Gambia to Dakar in Senegal, a journey of around 12 hours. One of the people travelling with me from Banjul was a young man called Oussainou, who soon told me that he was making for Libya and then, he hoped, to Europe. Oussainou was wearing a thin red shirt and carried a small money belt, and nothing else. He told me he had felt as if he had no choice; all his friends had left and if he had stayed he would have been seen as a coward, treated as the young boy who would always make the tea for his elders. Ultimately, without constructive work to develop an appreciation both in the region and outside it of the depth and values of the cultures and histories of Greater Senegambia, this is a process which will be hard to reverse.

Invitations and visas

Gradually, Lucy Durán and I assembled a list of possible invitees, and when the grant was awarded by the British Academy we set to work. We had to work very fast: we had four months from the outcome of the bid process to the date we had set for the workshop at the end of June, and we knew that this would only be just enough time.

The core idea around which we planned the workshop was to bring the disciplines of History and Music together in their discourse on cultural identities. This suited both our own disciplinary approaches (Lucy is a musicologist, I am a historian), and also the cultural framework of Greater Senegambia, where historians traditionally were musicians – the griot caste who were the praise-singers of kings and princes and performed oral historical accounts of the great political upheavals of the distant and more recent past. We wanted to bring practitioners of these disciplines into dialogue and, from the ensuing interaction, help both to think about their craft, and also about strategies through which to revivify cultural programmes in the region itself. We also wanted this to appeal to members of the public and of the diasporas in the UK, and so cast the net very widely when it came to advertisements and participation.

Gradually, a long, eclectic and unique guest list began

to take shape.² With seven visas required for West African visitors, this was an extremely ambitious list. The visa application process to enter the UK is now such that even prominent cultural figures from Africa face an extremely demanding process to be granted a visa by the British Embassy. The system appears to be designed to dissuade all applications, even those by figures with whom it is important for Britain to develop good working relationships. The system implemented by the Home Office in West Africa required, for instance, one Malian attendee to fly to Dakar and spend two days there whilst they had their visa interview, even though there is a British Embassy in Bamako. Even where the interviews can be conducted in an applicant's home country, the applicant must leave their passport often for two or three weeks since they all have to be sent to Accra in Ghana which is the only place where visas now are issued for the whole of West Africa; for prominent cultural figures such as the ones we invited, being without a passport for such a long period of time can of course be extremely problematic.

Nevertheless we were lucky that all our proposed delegates were willing to undergo this ordeal. Even then, there were many crises. One visa was refused with the reason given that the Home Office did not believe that the applicant would leave the UK after the conference; given that he is the leader of a political party in his home country, this was a curious line of reasoning. In another case, tickets had to be changed (at a cost of £700) on the very morning the workshop was due to begin in order to allow the attendee to make it, even though they had paid a large sum for a priority application. As the organisational process continued and the workshop took shape, therefore, one of the subtexts inevitably became just how much harder it is becoming to organise such an event. The value and importance of genuinely collaborative international workshops projects such as this is huge, for these events provide discrete space for people to discuss and create bonds across boundaries and languages around themes of real importance. Many of the contacts that are made will lead in turn to future work. And yet the space and opportunity to stage these events is becoming ever more circumscribed.

Formats and languages

In spite of all these organisational headaches and last-minute switches, the workshop began as and when it should have done, on Wednesday 24 June 2015, and almost everyone we hoped to invite managed to make it.

2. Among those invited to present, perform and discuss were the anthropologists Marloes Janson (SOAS) and Ferdinand de Jong (University of East Anglia); historians Boubakar Barry (Université Cheikh Anta Diop – Dakar), Hassoum Ceesay (University of The Gambia), Peter Mark (Wesleyan University), José Lingna Nafané (Bristol), and Ibrahima Seck (Whitney Plantation Heritage Museum, Louisiana); the linguists Friederike Lüepke (SOAS) and Tal Tamari (CNRS – Paris); MANDE studies former chair, David Conrad; the musicians Manecas Costa (Guinea-Bissau), Lassana Diabaté (Mali – Guinea), Tony Dudu (Guinea-Bissau), Nakany Kanté (Guinea), Kadiyaly Kouyate (Senegal), and Karim Mbaye (Senegal); and the musicologists Daniel Laeomahuma Jatta (National Centre for Arts and Culture, The Gambia) and Patricia Tang (MIT).



Figure 1
Jordi Tomás talking about his film *Kasumàày*, about the peace process in the Casamance region of Senegal. Photo: Anna de Mutiis.



Figure 2
The Senegalo-Guinean historian Boubakar Barry, who coined the term 'Greater Senegambia' for the culturally linked West African region encompassing what are now the Republics of Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Senegal and The Gambia. Photo: Anna de Mutiis.



Figure 3
The Gambian scholar and musician Daniel Laeomahuma Jatta. Photo: Anna de Mutiis.

We devised a fluid format, which suited both the aims of what we wanted to achieve and the nature of discussion and dialogue in Greater Senegambia itself. There were six main workshop sessions, and each of them combined presentations on a thematic aspect of research, with musical performance and discussion connected to that subject. Delegates were also treated to a performer's workshop which brought together all the musicians on the Thursday evening, and produced an unforgettable *mélange* of Greater Senegambian music, while two new films were shown: Ely Rosenblum's film of a performance of the Sunjata epic by Lassana Diabaté, Cherif Keita and Hawa Kassa Mady (which was followed by a discussion from Diabaté and Keita), and Jordi Tomás's film *Kasumàày*, about the peace process in the Casamance region of Senegal (which was presented by Tomás himself – Figure 1).³

A key issue which also had to be addressed was that of language. Most of the discussion was in English, not least so that those attending from the diaspora communities and the public could follow the event; but there were many delegates whose preferred language of communication was Bamana, French or Portuguese. Multilingual interventions were a feature of the event, and ad hoc translations by those who were able to move between the various linguistic zones were therefore important. This was also emblematic of one of the biggest dividing lines in the region, the official working languages inherited from the colonial period. Towards the end of the workshop, Boubakar Barry (Figure 2) made a public intervention on this point, that the early post-colonial nation-builders in Africa had made a grave strategic error when opting for the continuation of the colonial languages as languages of education and governance, cementing divisions between nation-states where ever closer integration would have been much more beneficial.

3. The Sunjata epic is the foundational oral narrative for the empire of Mali; the Casamance region of southern Senegal has been experiencing a low-level insurgency since 1981.

Patterns and themes

As the three days of the workshop proceeded, key aspects of the discussion took shape. First was the way in which the workshop format allowed interdisciplinarity to breathe. So many different aspects of the cultural, physical and lived lives of the region were aired, and the ways in which they connected to one another were made manifest in presentations and discussion. A particularly moving example was the panel on 'cultural transmission' in the morning of the final day. This ran about an hour and a half over schedule, but no one regretted it. The anthropologist Ferdinand de Jong analysed the use of the *kankurang* masquerade in contemporary Casamance, and how it is being used to enforce gender norms and old hierarchies. The historian Ibrahima Seck discussed the role of an antecedent to the *kankurang* in shaping masquerades in the New Orleans carnival. And all this was interwoven with the question of cultural transmission of musical arts in the region today through a dialogue between the balafon player Lassana Diabaté, resident in Mali, and Lucy Durán. Most importantly, in each of the sessions, the themes that emerged did so through both presentations, dialogue and performance – in true Greater Senegambian style.

Another welcome aspect of the workshop was the way in which all the composite regions of Greater Senegambia were discussed in detail and in relation with one another. The performers' workshop saw musicians from each of the five constituent countries of the region perform together (Figure 4). And over the three days key questions relating to each of the countries of the region emerged. On the second day, for instance, the *gumbe* musicians Manecas Costa and Tony Dudú, from Guinea-Bissau, discussed both the role of *gumbe* music during the anticolonial war, and the relationship that *gumbe* musicians have to the state today. And there were many echoes in this of the discussion the previous day by Daniel Laeomahuma Jatta (Figure 3) of the loss of traditional cultural knowledge in The Gambia, and the



Figure 4
From left to right: Lucy Durán, Tony Dudú, Lassana Diabaté, Manecas Costa, Nakany Kante, Karim Mbaye, Toby Green. These were all the musical performers to come to the June 2015 event. The photograph was taken after the performers' workshop. Photo: Anna de Mutiis.

need of government programmes to revive this before it was too late.

The way in which these discussions flitted from one region and theme to another was one of the things that Lucy Durán and I had wanted to encourage. It is surprisingly hard for this sort of intra-country discussion to occur in Greater Senegambia itself, owing to linguistic and political barriers; it was the sort of wide-ranging and free-flowing exchange that has to happen if these barriers can be lowered to some extent.

Cultural integration, cultural heritage

By ranging so widely across the region, both geographically, conceptually, and thematically, many of the key questions about how to promote regional integration were addressed. Many of the countries in the region are currently undergoing some form of political instability, with a political crisis in Guinea-Bissau and Mali and the as yet unresolved Casamance separatist conflict in Senegal. One of the things that became clear over the workshop was that the finding of common political ground might well require the rediscovery and re-vivification of the rich common cultural ground which spreads across the whole region. It was indeed quite a

sad comment when one of the workshop participants noted that such an event would have been hard to host in Greater Senegambia itself, owing to tensions about where it should be hosted and what language it should be hosted in.

With the importance of the region's common culture being highlighted, another vital question posed was that of how to safeguard cultural heritage. The rise of globalising forces and the mass migration of the region's youth toward Europe were issues raised several times, and they pose serious problems for the future of the region's cultural heritage. One speaker said that at a recent event in The Gambia it had been said that there were only three expert players of the *ngoni* lute left in the country. A key issue raised was that dealing with this crisis might require some social changes: whereas musical practice was hitherto in the region the province of the griots, the safeguarding of cultural forms required a democratisation and the breaking down of old social barriers and caste systems. As Boubakar Barry said, these had been rigidified during the era of the slave trade as questions of competition and political rivalry became ever more intense, and it was therefore vital now that these learning processes could be spread throughout the population, so that everyone felt ownership of the cultural richness of the region.

Different

With this mixture of intense discussion, the variety of languages spoken, and the interchanges between musicians and academics and thinkers, all those who were there felt that this was an event with a difference. In developing this different space for dialogue, Lucy Durán and I tried to create a space for academic discussion on issues which really mattered, where thought could emerge as performance as well as pre-cooked. For this reason, paper titles and abstracts were not pre-circulated, so that participants came to each session freshly and did not prejudge in advance what might be discussed. Workshop sessions started late and often finished later, and when the Thursday afternoon session was concluded by impromptu dancing in the lecture hall, the session chair Richard Black (Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research at SOAS) announced with a wry smile that this was 'the most unruly conference audience' he'd ever seen.

By the end of the three days of the workshop, participants were both exhilarated and exhausted. Various plots and future collaborations were hatched, including the idea of a follow-up event in Ziguinchor (the largest town in Casamance) or Guinea-Bissau, and the idea of working further with Manecas Costa to build up the Festival de Cacheu in Guinea-Bissau. Musical collaborations between the performers are also in the pipeline, so that what is most of all important is safeguarded – that this should have been the start of something and not the end. In one case it is hoped that this will lead to the construction of more musical instruments for a cultural centre being designed in The Gambia which aims to educate young Gambians on their rich cultural heritage, so that skills and techniques are not lost to future generations.

Answers

Putting this together was a major logistical challenge, perhaps the hardest event to bring together of the half-dozen or so international conferences I have organised.

As detailed, the ever-present and increasing barriers placed around visas for African visitors created several nightmares for the organisers which were only resolved at great expense. However, in the end it was all worth it, and as MIT Professor Patricia Tang put it, this was 'truly one of the most enjoyable and stimulating conferences I've been to in a very long time'.

It was also vital that we were able to engage with an audience beyond academia. Music journalists attended, as did members of the diaspora including novelists and committed campaigners to end FGM. Lucy Durán and I also planned after the event how to present the idea of what we tried to do with the workshop to an even wider public audience through the making of a film; to this end, the remaining BARSEA funds are helping to finance this, and the film will be distributed to colleagues and centres across Africa in order for the discussions to gain more traction.

The real subject of the workshop was the holistic construct that is Greater Senegambian culture, and how that cuts across academic disciplines and nation state boundaries. This was what all workshop participants touched on in some form or other; and all were in agreement that it was through the safeguarding and revivification of this holistic culture that some of the major problems facing the area, especially youth migration across the Sahara and political conflict, might be addressed. One figure repeatedly mentioned was Amílcar Cabral, in light of his famous essay on 'National Liberation and Culture': as the workshop showed, the depths of culture offer many answers to the depths of the problems facing the region, and the world, in the 21st century.⁴

The first British Academy Rising Star Engagement Awards were made in 2015. The recipients of a second round will be announced in March 2016.

4. Amílcar Cabral, 'National Liberation and Culture', *Transition*, 45 (1974), 12-17.

Dogged by history

Why Israel's powerful labour federation was rejected by the 2011 social protest movement

JONATHAN PREMINGER

Dr Jonathan Preminger completed his doctoral research into labour relations in Israel under the supervision of Professor Uri Ram at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He is now a British Academy Newton International Fellow at Cardiff University, where he is continuing his research into the political economy of Israel, focusing on the shipping industry, with Professor Helen Sampson. He is also preparing a book on Israel's recent wave of unionising.

For a few heady months in the summer of 2011, it seemed Israeli society was about to change completely. Walking along Tel Aviv's leafy Rothschild Boulevard, among hundreds of tents, discussion groups, speakers, soup kitchens, banners, drummers and jugglers, I was amazed by the energy and optimism – swept away by the sense that this grassroots struggle was making an impact (Figure 1). This was our Arab Spring, our Indignados, our Occupy Wall Street – and we were doing it bigger, louder, more democratically and more colourfully than anyone else.

At that time I had already been researching labour representation in Israel for a couple of years, and was interested to see that two relatively new general unions, including Koach Laovdim ('power to the workers'), were there among the protesters, a constant presence in debates and demonstrations. However, Israel's main general labour federation, the Histadrut, was conspicuous by its absence. In fact, I heard later that it had quietly allowed the social protest leaders to use its Tel Aviv offices for meetings, but publicly at least, the protesters wanted nothing to do with the Histadrut, and had sent its chairperson ignominiously packing.

In the light of organised labour's history of protest around the world, of activism in demanding rights and welfare, and of broad alliances with various social movements, including those that rocked much of the world just a few years ago, this rejection of the Histadrut is somewhat puzzling. It is even more so when we consider that the Histadrut is huge and powerful, counting almost 30 per cent of the workforce among its members – by



Figure 1
The social protest movement in Tel Aviv, 2011: colourful, cacophonous, diverse. Photo: ActiveStills.

far the largest labour organisation in Israel, with strong workers' committees in key industries who are able to bring the economy to a standstill if they choose.

Indeed, the social protest movement erupted in the middle of another, quieter sea-change. From around 2007 onwards, Israel saw a wave of trade union organising drives and labour struggles, some of which were very high profile and received widespread media coverage. The discontent driving these campaigns was drawn from the kind of issues which ignited the social protest: high prices and low wages, socioeconomic insecurity, employment uncertainty, and the general feeling that somewhere 'up there', someone was screwing us over.

It seemed to me that this was a perfect opportunity for labour organisations to do as they have done countless times in history, and take a prominent role in a wider coalition for social justice. Surely an alliance between the Histadrut and the social protest movement would have added significantly to the strength of both?

At the end of that long and exciting summer, when the 'tent cities' had been dismantled or forcibly cleared by the police, it was clear that the social protest had not brought any substantial change, nor had it collapsed into revolution and renewed dictatorship as elsewhere. Instead, it had fizzled out into politics as usual. And I

began thinking about this seemingly wasted opportunity and the puzzle of the Histadrut's role.

An answer to this puzzle can be found in the nature of the recent wave of union organising, which reflects a lacuna in Israel's labour history in comparison to other labour movements. Two aspects of the wave are particularly notable. Firstly, unions were having to learn how to organise because they had had little experience of it in the past, and similarly, employers were learning how to thwart organising efforts. Secondly, the legal and institutional frameworks of industrial relations were being recalibrated to enable such organising and to define the boundaries of what is permissible. Indeed – and this is the lacuna – the country's glorious labour history has included very little grassroots organising: union organising is new to Israel.

The Histadrut, in fact, is not a 'regular' labour federation which was built from the bottom up through the efforts of workers coming together; it is a top-down institution created by a political leadership for political ends. So the Histadrut was – and is often still perceived as – part of the same old, ostensibly corrupt establishment against which people were protesting in 2011. When they came out onto the streets, they were seeking a new politics, of grassroots activism and participatory democracy, and the Histadrut's staid institutions epitomised all that was wrong with the old system. They wanted nothing to do with it.

The strange non-labour character of a labour organisation

That the Histadrut is an anomaly in itself requires an explanation. We are familiar with the idea that the State and employers' organisations are compelled to contend with a strong labour movement when the movement's strength is drawn from organising and activism – organising and activism in the past at least, if not in the present. Indeed, there is much literature that discusses how past struggles led to the creation of institutions which delimit and 'frame' current disputes, and how these institutions can continue to exist even after the balance of forces that led to their creation has changed completely. This, in fact, is the heart of what is known as neocorporatism, the political arrangement in which employers' organisations, labour organisations and the State come together within frameworks of collective bargaining to agree on socioeconomic policy at various levels.

But what can push a political leadership within a capitalist economy to *choose* to do business with labour organisations, even up to creating those organisations themselves? To understand this, we need to go back a long way, to the first waves of Jewish immigration to what was then Ottoman and British Mandatory Palestine, decades before the State of Israel was established.¹

Briefly, Europe in the 19th century was swept by a wave of nationalism. Riding this wave, some Jewish in-

1. Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire until 1917-18, when British forces conquered the area. Britain was later granted the Mandate over Palestine by the League of Nations, in effect from 1923.



Figure 2
A poster marking 30 years since the Histadrut was founded. The text reads 'Shield for the worker, home for the immigrant', using the word 'oleh' which refers specifically to Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel. The organisation's full name was 'The general federation of Hebrew workers in the Land of Israel'. Image: palestineposterproject.org (public domain).

tellectuals, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, came to the conclusion that a Jewish homeland was the best solution to the 'Jewish question' and European anti-Semitism. This idea was appealing to the newly secular, educated middle class Jews. From the 1880s onwards, and particularly from 1904 until well into the 1930s, many made their way to Palestine, which had been marked as the ideal location for this future Jewish homeland. Thus the Zionist movement took shape.

In a very basic sense, this Jewish immigration to Palestine can be seen as a settlement movement much like the Europeans in North America or Australia: they went to another part of the world, took over territory, wrested control of resources from the local population, and eventually created a society in which that local population were at best second-class citizens, and at worst hardly human at all. Of course, there are some important differences between the Jewish settlement of Palestine and the colonial projects of the major European powers. Most importantly, we should note that the Jewish immigrants were not sent by some powerful 'mother state', and they had no national army to impose their



Figure 3
A poster celebrating 53 years since the Histadrut was founded, showing the dual nature of the organisation. The text reads: ‘One hand works, the other holds the sword’.

presence and ensure their physical security in the new country. Similarly, they had no army or administration to ensure the settlers had access to the two resources which are crucial to any settlement enterprise: land and jobs.²

So at first, the immigrants were undercut by local labour: the Palestinian Arabs were willing to work for lower wages, and do the kind of work that most of the new immigrants were not used to doing. For this reason, together with the relatively harsh conditions, many of the first Jewish immigrants to arrive in Palestine did not stay long. The Zionist leadership had to find a way of keeping the immigrants in Palestine, particularly by ensuring work with higher wages and improving living conditions. Their solution was to create a separate ‘Jewish’ economy within the larger geographical territory under the British administration. This essentially meant the collectivisation and centralisation of the Jewish community to enable the control of jobs, wages and services, funded to a large extent by external contributions. Thus a collectivist ideology was promoted,

2. Gershon Shafir was one of the first to discuss Jewish immigration in these terms; see Shafir (1989), *Land, Labour and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 1882-1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

emphasising solidarity among Jews for the sake of the national project. Hence too the Histadrut was established (in 1920) as an administrative organisation, distributing funds and providing essential services to the settler immigrants (Figure 2). These immigrants – whether workers, self-employed, unemployed or retired – became Histadrut members almost automatically, because they needed the services it provided.

The Histadrut was also central to developing the collectivist ‘Jewish’ economy. Major economic enterprises were collectively owned through the Histadrut, including in agriculture, industry, public utilities, banking and construction. As both employer and worker representative (Figure 3), the Histadrut was thus able to create an internal market, partly insulated from the general labour market, to a considerable extent freeing the Jewish immigrants from having to compete with Palestinian Arab labour.³ Jewish employers, of course, were reluctant to take on the more expensive Jewish workers, which led to a call for ‘Hebrew labour’ – an ideology which emphasised the importance to the national project of employing only Jews.

The kibbutz movement can be viewed as the epitome of the collective approach to settlement. The *kibbutzim* were communal agricultural settlements, the first of which was established in 1912. Drawing very explicitly on a strong socialist ideology, many kibbutzim took the ideals of communal living to great lengths, eating together in a communal dining room, sharing community tasks and rotating jobs, sharing ownership of resources, and even bringing up their children together in dedicated children’s houses. These settlements, a kind of physically enclosed village run by the members, were ideal for ensuring a Jewish presence in what was often hostile territory, while also solving the problem of work: the kibbutz members ‘employed themselves’, and assisted each other in overcoming the challenges of immigration and hard labour in tough conditions.

In 1936, the first of the ‘tower and stockade’ kibbutzim was established (for the sake of full disclosure, I must mention that my grandparents were among the founding members of this kibbutz, and I myself was born there). The idea for these kibbutzim was that during the course of a single day, the members could set up the prefabricated parts of the settlement, so that by nightfall they would have at least a watchtower and stockade to keep them safe (Figure 4). Here the value of the kibbutzim in the settlement enterprise becomes abundantly clear, and it is not by chance that they have such an exalted place in the official history of Israel.

We can see, then, that the labour movement (the Histadrut) did not grow up in opposition to ‘capital’, or employers, but was created from above by Zionist leaders in co-operation with employers.⁴ While socialist ideology in a bewildering range of variations had been part of the kaleidoscope of Zionist thought, it had developed as the

3. See Deborah Bernstein (2000), *Constructing Boundaries: Jewish and Arab Workers in Mandatory Palestine*, Albany: SUNY Press, for a discussion of the ways in which the “insulated” Jewish economy was developed.

4. See Michael Shalev (1992), *Labour and the Political Economy in Israel*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, for a full discussion of the Histadrut’s role as employer, labour representative and national institution.

dominant discourse along with ‘socialist’ practices only in response to the very concrete needs of a settlement movement that had no support from an army or ‘mother state’. Likewise, welfare services and the institutions of the welfare state were not the result of worker organising or social movements demanding basic social rights, as they were in many other countries, but were created as systems of support for settlers. And we can see just how crucial this approach was thought to be if we note that even the non-socialist, liberal streams of Zionism (what we would probably call liberal capitalist) were in favour of the collectivist method.

The end of labour’s exalted role in the Zionist project

Israel was established in 1948. Almost immediately we begin to see changes to the way the Jewish leadership (now within the framework of State institutions) managed the economy and labour market. Nonetheless, the institutions developed earlier were not easily shunted off stage. Most notably, the Histadrut continued to control an enormous empire well into the 1970s, owning about a third of the economy as the second largest employer after the state. Real change came only in the 1980s and 1990s with a wave of sales of Histadrut enterprises. This change was marked by the National Health Insurance Law 1995, which separated the Histadrut from its health maintenance organisation, and essentially transformed it into ‘just’ a labour federation – albeit an enormous and still powerful one. The 1995 law also separated membership in the Histadrut from membership in the health maintenance organisation: since many had been Histadrut members mainly in order to access its health services, this separation drastically reduced Histadrut membership numbers and thus reduced union density in Israel at a single stroke.

It took at least another decade for the Histadrut, and workers more generally, to comprehend fully that their main source of power had been undercut, and to begin organising. In 2007, the small general union mentioned earlier, Koach Laovdim, was founded, and in 2010 – some 90 years after it was established – the Histadrut finally set up a department dedicated to assisting people who wish to unionise and form a workers’ committee at their workplace. But while Koach Laovdim was welcomed by the social protest movement of 2011 as a grassroots union, whose leadership and activists are notably young, urban and cool, the Histadrut was unable to shake off its image as a member of the old political and economic establishment.



Figure 4
A stamp (c.1963) commemorating the first ‘tower and stockade’ kibbutz, reflecting the importance of this kind of settlement in the official national history.

And here we should note an additional paradox. After the State of Israel was established, there was no longer any need for the conceptual link between being a ‘worker’ and being a settler in a national movement, and over the next couple of decades this link began to unravel; yet just when organised labour was being freed from the shackles of nationalism, its power as an engine for social change was waning: the salience of working-class identity has declined, organised labour is perceived as a narrow interest group, and the legitimacy of neocorporatist structures is in question as the State seeks increasingly market-oriented solutions to social problems.

So now the Histadrut’s position in the social protest movement of 2011 becomes clearer. As a historical institution, it was up against the suspicion that it was part of the same corrupt establishment that was the focus of the protesters’ ire. And as a labour organisation, it faced the widespread belief that organised labour represents nobody’s interests except its own. The smaller unions, whose main figures cut their teeth in social activism of various sorts, were welcomed as just one more organisation in a broad, diverse, colourful alliance; but the imposing presence of the Histadrut was seen as a throw-back to a different kind of politics – a politics whose time is up.

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Migration and older people in Bolivia

Between opportunities and new vulnerabilities

TANJA BASTIA

Dr Tanja Bastia is Senior Lecturer in Urban Development at the Global Development Institute at the University of Manchester. Here she describes her British Academy-supported research into the effects of migration on the migrants' parents who are 'left behind' in Bolivia.

Introduction

Interest in migration is currently booming, given the large numbers of people who move across international borders as a result of conflict and persecution. Journalists and researchers alike are paying close attention to the movement of people – in terms of migration or refugee movements (and the distinction between the two), how states are reacting to these movements, and the consequences these movements might have both for those who move and for the places that migrants and refugees aim to settle in. Yet in both newspaper reports and academic writing on migration (including forced migration), there continue to be two specific biases: an assumption that those who move are young, and a disproportionate interest in countries of destination. Through a project supported by a British Academy-Leverhulme Small Research Grant and pilot funding from the Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing (MICRA), I aim to challenge these biases by focusing on countries of origin and on older people – specifically the consequences that migration has on the older 'left behind'.

Most images we see about migration – the movement of people within and across international borders – are associated with the young, the economically active, people who, despite facing obstacles and challenges in their places of origin and on their journeys, are in their prime. Migration as a subject of study is likewise almost obsessed with the young, generally assuming that those who migrate do so because of war or work, but do so in their most active years. However, migration is a complex phenomenon that does not always discriminate



Figure 1
The author (second from left) visiting an Hombres Nuevos drop-in centre in the Plan 3000 neighbourhood of Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

in favour of the young. People of all ages engage in migration. Many are also affected by the migration of others. Children have received some attention in migration studies so far, mostly in respect of the effects that migration has on those children who have been left behind by their parents, and to a lesser extent on child migrants in their own right. However, older people have generally been marginalised, in terms of those who migrate at later stages in their lives, but also in terms of the consequences that migration has for older people – the migrants' parents, for example.

What we see in the news and read about in both newspapers and academic articles is mostly concerned with migrants themselves and what happens to them once they arrive at their destination. There is an inherent bias to studying and analysing the effects of migration in so-called 'host countries': issues of integration, language, labour market, housing, etc. Migration, however, does not only affect the countries that migrants arrive in, but also those where they departed from, as well as the many places through which they pass on their journeys towards their destination. Putting the emphasis on countries

of origin is essential, for these countries are generally poorer than the countries of destination, and have fewer resources to invest in social programmes. These are the countries that are currently expected to have almost 80 per cent of the world's population over the age of 60 by 2050.¹ These are the countries where most of the population works in the informal sector. They therefore have no provision for pensions when they come to what in higher-income countries we assume is a 'pensionable age'. People therefore need to continue working well into their old age. These are the same countries where old age is associated with greater poverty.

Ageing and migration in Bolivia

Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in the Latin American region, with an average income of 5,000 US dollars per year. It has experienced high rates of economic growth in the last few years, some of which has been invested in social programmes. Since 1997 the government has had a universal cash transfer, the *Renta Dignidad* (Dignity Income, a name that was often ridiculed by our interviewees given the meagre payment), that pays about 30 US dollars per month to everyone aged 60 and over. For many of our interviewees, this payment is a life-saver, particularly for those living in rural areas.

Bolivians have been migrating to Argentina since the 18th century – traditionally cross-border migration from the south of Bolivia to the northern Argentinean regions. But Bolivians have diversified their migrations dramatically over the last few decades. Today migration encompasses every single region in Bolivia, and its destinations include the US, Brazil, Israel, Russia, Italy and Spain. Official figures estimate that about 7 per cent of the Bolivian population live abroad and that over 10 per cent of the population has somebody living abroad. Its population is relatively young compared to its neighbours, with only 6 per cent of the population aged 65 years and over, which is not surprising given the low life expectancy of 67 years on average.²

It is within this context of diversified migration streams and a relatively small ageing population that this project has been aiming to address the consequences that migration has for older people, those over the age of 60. Since 2013, and with the collaboration of Bolivian researchers at the University of San Simon in Cochabamba and the research group *Jaina* in Tarija (Figure 2), we have collected over 60 testimonies from men and women living in cities, its peripheries known as peri-urban areas, and rural areas. This is an explorative project that aims to uncover some of the ways in which the migrants' parents have been coping with the migration of their (adult) children. The qualitative methodology of semi-structured interviews was used to collect information on



Figure 2
A *Jaina* workshop in Tarija, southern Bolivia. Photo: the author.

the interviewees' livelihoods, their main problems, their relationship with neighbours and different institutions as well as their experience of their children's migration.

Migration leads to increased vulnerabilities

For many interviewees, though by no means all, the migration of their children was associated with sadness. Being far from their children was, for some, not something that they had envisaged. Particularly in rural areas, there was an expectation that children would settle independently but somewhere close to their ageing parents. Maria, a 62-year-old woman from Cochabamba, for example, said: 'I cried, because I had never thought that I would separate from my children, never. I thought that I was going to be with my children my whole life until the day I die. But I cried, I still cry now when I remember.'

Sadness seemed to be a more common experience among women; or women, at least, were more likely to talk openly about the sadness they felt when their children left. When men talked about being sad, they related it more to the opportunities that in their view their children had missed as a result of migration. This was most common among men in rural areas, from where their children migrated to the less lucrative regional destinations, such as Chile or Argentina, to work in menial jobs. Francisco, a 72-year-old man from a rural area in the department of Cochabamba, for example said: 'I never wanted him to go, I was demoralised [...] yes, I was totally demoralised because I said "Why are you going to go? Stay here." But he decided to go.'

Many fathers had hoped that their children would continue their education, go to university and then find a professional job, as doctors for example. The migration, particularly of their eldest sons, might signify financial independence for their children and possibly some remittances for their parents, but it is also associated with a failed social mobility project that had been promised by the widening of primary and secondary education.

This sadness was sometimes also associated with loneliness and vulnerability. In rural areas in Tarija, interviewees had to keep working the land well into their 70s and 80s, because this was their only source of livelihoods. With their children absent, they had to hire farm help to keep farming their plots, and this was only possible if they had produce to sell in order to receive some cash with which to pay the hired help: a vicious circle meaning that they could not stop working their

1. UNFPA and HelpAge International, *Ageing in the twenty-first century: a celebration and a challenge* (New York and London, 2012).

2. Figures from: WorldBank, 'Life expectancy' (2015) <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN/countries/XJ?display=graph>; Instituto Nacional de Estadística, *Bolivia: Características de población y vivienda, censo nacional de población y vivienda 2012* (La Paz, 2012); International Organization for Migration, *Perfil migratorio de Bolivia* (Buenos Aires, 2011).



Figure 3
Selling produce on a vegetable stall in Tarija, southern Bolivia. Photo: the author.

plots. Severe lack of water resource means that farming in this area is arduous. Moreover, the absence of younger people was also associated with increased thefts and land incursions. Some interviewees were unable to secure their land and livestock from trespassers and thieves, hinting at loosening social control that used to be exercised by the wider community.

The community is not just essential for practical help but also for a sense of belonging. But being able to continue working is essential to maintain one's standing within the community, as in the words of Juan, a 67-year-old man from a rural area in Cochabamba:

I only hope to be able to continue working, so that I will always have something to eat, or otherwise, where can we get money from? Even people ignore us when we don't have an income, if I was to go to any family, they would think that I was there to beg, to borrow something ... they would receive me with those thoughts. That's why I have to continue working as long as I have the strength to do that. Life has been that: work and work. I give thanks to God for the Renta Dignidad, which we didn't have before. That helps us a lot.

In these cases, the migration of younger people is leading to an exacerbation of already existing vulnerabilities. This is particularly the case in rural areas, where our interviewees had to continue working the land in order to survive.

Migration as an opportunity

For many middle-class families, despite the sadness that they might feel as a result of living far away from their children, migration also represents an opportunity. Some interviewees were proud and happy that their children had achieved better education and professional qualifications as a result of migration. Some were also able to pursue their professional careers abroad, opportunities which might not have been available in Bolivia. Marta's daughter had gone to Brazil to specialise in dentistry and opened her own surgery, and while her daughter was away, Marta managed the flat that her daughter had bought in Cochabamba. She collects rent and makes sure that the flat is kept in good order. For these families, the migration of their own children implies upward social mobility for the whole family, through improved opportunities for professional education and jobs for the children, as well as additional income opportunities and a more secure financial future for the parents who remain in the country of origin.

In the city's peripheries, the peri-urban areas that have been populated since the 1980s by internal migrants arriving from rural areas and mining towns, migration also represents an opportunity for upward social mobility. Here grandmothers are often in charge of their grandchildren when their own children migrate. Even in cases where migrants give birth abroad, they often send their grandchildren back home to be cared for by their

parents. The migrants' jobs might not allow them also to care for others. For example, they might work long hours, double shifts, or be live-in carers; or they might not earn enough also to support their children or pay for childcare. The migrants' parents, usually the mother, 'become mothers again' and take their grandchildren into their own care. For some, this represents a difficulty, for example, if the grandchildren are very small or if they are teenagers. But for others, having their grandchildren with them helps them deal with the loneliness they feel as a result of their own children being far away. Grandchildren provide companionship and a renewed sense of responsibility and purpose. This is clearly not the case for everyone, but it definitely is in contexts where grandmothers had been widowed at an early age and they are in receipt of remittances that cover the costs of caring for their grandchildren.

Besides looking after their grandchildren, these grandmothers in the urban peripheries also become very active in investing their children's remittances, by buying plots of land, overseeing the construction of houses and generally taking care of their children's investments. They play an essential role, particularly in families where migrants might be undocumented, lacking proper working or residency papers. When this is the case, travelling back to their country of origin represents a very high cost and is therefore generally avoided. When this happens it is therefore essential to have somebody trustworthy to oversee their investments. In these cases, like those of middle-class families, migration also becomes an avenue for social mobility. With the help of the parents who have 'stayed behind', migrants are able to build a more secure future for themselves, their parents and their children.

Conclusion

The qualitative and explorative nature of this project does not provide the basis for a more thorough generalisation of its initial findings. But so far it has generated a very interesting set of interviews that highlight the importance of taking into account the views and experiences of older people, particularly in countries of origin. These original perspectives will complement and counterbalance the overwhelming focus on younger people and countries of destination in what we know about migration.

The interviews also show that migration has different consequences for different groups of people. This heterogeneity needs to be taken into account in any analysis and policy formulation about migration. Gender, class, place of residence, race and ethnicity mean that one particular story or policy will not fit everyone's needs.

Throughout the duration of the project, I have also had the opportunity to disseminate its findings both in Manchester, through an international workshop funded by MICRA, and through workshops in Bolivia, funded by the British Academy-Leverhulme Small Research Grant and the University of Manchester Pilot Rapid Response Impact Fund. These dissemination events have provided a critical platform for the discussion of emerging ideas related to ageing and migration. In Bolivia, workshops were attended by local and regional authorities, HelpAge International Bolivia, some interviewees, as well as grassroots organisations representing older people. The discussion provided useful feedback on initial findings but also the opportunity to highlight the opportunities as well as the challenges raised by international migration. Critically, they also provided the space to raise awareness about the needs and specific situation that older people face in Bolivia. Countering stereotypical portrayals of older people as being passive and a drain on national resources, the testimonies gathered through this project highlight the important contribution they make in all aspects of society, from the caring of grandchildren, to looking after the economic investments of their absent children and contributing to an active civil society. With the continued collaboration of HelpAge International, it is my hope that we will be able to continue securing funding to develop this work further.

Dr Tanja Bastia was a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow, 2007-2010. Her research deals with migration and social inequalities, particularly gender but also ethnicity. She has been conducting long-term and multi-sited ethnographic research with Bolivian migrants in Buenos Aires and various cities in Spain. She is currently engaged in two new research projects: the one described in this article, and a second one dealing with urban citizenship and grassroots organising in Buenos Aires' informal settlements, funded by cities@manchester. For more information about her research see <http://tanjabastia.wordpress.com>

Celebrating fifty years of the Thank-Offering to Britain Fund

ANTHONY GRENVILLE

On 10 November 2015, the British Academy, in partnership with the Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR), hosted an event to mark the 50th Anniversary of the 'Thank-Offering to Britain' Fund: 'Commemoration and Celebration: The British Academy and the Jewish Refugee Academics in Britain after 1933'.



The following is an edited version of the lecture given on that occasion by Dr Tony Grenville, Consultant Editor of the *AJR Journal* (pictured above).

The relationship between the British Academy and the Jewish academic refugees from Hitler, which reached a high point with the Thank-Offering to Britain Fellowship, did not emerge from a vacuum in the 1960s. A significant relationship had already developed between the refugee academics and British institutions like the Academy in the 1930s. I would argue that this helped to create the framework within which the relationship between the Jewish refugees in Britain, represented by the Association of Jewish Refugees, and the Academy, culminating in the creation of the Fellowship in November 1965, were to develop.

Refugee academics from the Third Reich seeking positions in Britain were fortunate in that an organisation had been established early on to assist those of them who had been deprived of their posts at German

universities or of their prospects of being appointed to such posts. This was the Academic Assistance Council, founded in 1933 on the initiative of William Beveridge and the Hungarian-born scientist Leo Szilard, which reconstituted itself in 1936 as the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning (SPSL) and helped many hundreds of refugee scholars to find employment in British or American academic institutions. Today, its successor organisation is known as CARA, the Council for At-Risk Academics. Though the SPSL was based in London, it proved impossible to place anything like all the refugee scholars in British posts; many went on to the USA. Nevertheless, the SPSL was almost unique as an organisation dedicated to placing refugee academics in new posts. Its long-serving secretary, Esther 'Tess' Simpson, was regarded for decades, until her death in 1996, with the greatest affection by the many hundreds of academics who had benefited from her tireless efforts on their behalf. The SPSL had an office at Burlington House, seat of the Royal Society, but Esther Simpson was also a well-known figure at the British Academy. The institutional network connecting the SPSL and the British Academy emerges, for example, in that William Beveridge, founder of the SPSL, was a Fellow of the Academy.

Proposal

Against that background, I now turn to the establishment of what was originally called the 'Thank-You Britain' Fund. This evolved from a proposal in 1963 that the Jewish refugees from central Europe should make a public gesture of thanks to Britain, their adopted homeland, to be paid for by their donations. The idea originated with Victor Ross, a former refugee who was a senior executive with *Reader's Digest*. The Association of Jewish Refugees (AJR) joined forces with Ross and took on the administration of the fund-raising; Ross became co-chairman of the Fund's organising committee, alongside Werner M. Behr, AJR vice-chairman. The first mention of what was to become the Fund occurs in a report in *AJR Information*, the AJR's monthly journal, on a meeting



Recordings of the presentations may be found via www.britishacademy.ac.uk/commemoration-refugees

of the Board of the AJR held on 27 January 1963: 'it was suggested that an appropriate scheme should be launched by which the former refugees should express their gratitude to the British nation for having admitted them to this country twenty-five years ago.'

This was amplified by a statement that autumn, recalling the pogroms of November 1938:

In November, twenty-five years will have elapsed since the mass exodus of the Jews from Central Europe started. During the few months between the pogroms and the outbreak of war, this small island, then in an economic crisis, rescued more Jewish persecutees than any other single country. The Executive [of the AJR] is considering ways of visibly expressing the gratitude of the former refugees to the British people, and it is hoped that details of an appropriate scheme will be announced shortly.

Three months later, a boxed announcement appeared in the journal, headed 'Former Refugees' Thanks to Britain: Collective Gesture of Gratitude Planned'. Readers were informed that Victor Ross had published a letter in several national papers proposing such a gesture of collective gratitude and that the response to this letter had been most encouraging. The AJR and Ross were therefore considering several proposed schemes, and, once one was chosen, intended to launch an appeal 'on the widest possible basis'.

The scheme adopted became known as the 'Thank-You Britain' Fund, the proceeds of which were to be used for the awarding of Research Fellowships and the holding of lectures, both under the auspices of the British Academy. Ross approached the Academy, as the minutes of the meeting of its Council on 27 May 1964 recorded:

A proposal had been received from Mr. Victor Ross, on behalf of refugees from Nazi oppression who had settled happily in Great Britain, that a Fund should be established to commemorate their welcome into Britain. The suggestion was that the Fund should be named 'The Thank-offering to Britain' Fund, and that this Fund should be used for the establishment of a Lecture and Research Fellowship under the auspices of the Academy.

The subject of both the lecture and the fellowship was to 'relate to "Human Studies", widely interpreted in their bearing upon the welfare of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom'. The 'Thank-Offering to Britain' Fund Lecture was to be given every two years, for a fee of not less than £100; in the event, the lectures were given annually from 1966 till 1974, and thereafter mostly biennially until 2004. The 'Thank-Offering to Britain' Fund Research Award was to enable a Fellow selected by the Council to work for a period not exceeding three years at a university approved by the Council. With the co-operation of the British Academy secured, the AJR proceeded to publicise the scheme to its members and to raise funds. In a front-page article in *AJR Information* of September 1964, entitled 'A Quarter of a Century: Days of Remembrances', the AJR's long-serving General Secretary, Werner Rosenstock, introduced the 'Thank-You Britain' Fund to his readers; it was he who was

principally responsible for the administration of the Fund. He explained that the proceeds of the Fund were to be used for the awarding of research fellowships and the holding of lectures under the auspices of the British Academy, 'as a perpetual memorial of our gratitude'.

The Fund's patrons could scarcely have been more eminent. They were the distinguished economist Lord Lionel Robbins, President of the British Academy and author of the Robbins Report of 1963 on higher education; Sir Isaiah Berlin, a member of the Academy's Council (later President) and one of the great intellectual figures of his day; Professor (later Sir) Ernest B. Chain and Sir Hans Krebs, the two refugees from Nazism in Britain who had won Nobel Prizes by 1964; and a third refugee, Professor (later Sir) Ludwig Guttman, Director of the Stoke Mandeville Spinal Injuries Centre. The nineteen members of the Fund's committee included leading figures in the AJR and other refugee organisations. The organising committee of the Fund sent out to all AJR members a letter, signed by its two co-chairmen, inviting them to contribute to the Fund.

Response

The reaction to the appeal was gratifying. Already in October 1964, *AJR Information* reported that the response had been very encouraging. The appeal evidently struck a chord in the refugee community, as a letter sent by a contributor who was now deputy head of a college in Jamaica showed

I read in the *Manchester Guardian* about the 'Thank-You Britain' Fund. I was one of those who after the Kristallnacht was sent to Oranienburg [concentration camp] but managed to come to Britain in time before the outbreak of war. I will never be able to repay all the kindness and understanding that was shown to me from simple Lancashire cotton workers to Quaker refugee workers and Jewish manufacturers. I am now a British subject and could not wish for anything better. I am trying to repay part of my debt by teaching as a British subject in Jamaica. What I can send is totally inadequate, but I try to say 'Thank you' every day by my work.

A letter attached to a contribution received from New Jersey, USA, read:

I was only eight years old when we came to Britain from Germany. The ways in which we were accepted in those difficult times can never be repaid financially, but the heartfelt gratitude that so many of us felt for many years needed a form of expression. I am delighted to be able to contribute to your fitting memorial.

The British Academy also became aware of the unusual enthusiasm with which refugees reacted to the 'Thank-You Britain' Fund. On 21 July 1964, Miss D.W. Pearson, Assistant Secretary at the Academy, wrote to Victor Ross, enclosing a specimen form for a deed of covenant, a tax-efficient way for contributors to increase the amount of their donations at no extra cost to themselves. Evidently,

the printers (Oxford University Press) moved too slowly to keep pace with the eagerness of potential donors: before they had returned the proof of the form to the Academy, a handwritten note to Doris Pearson from another member of staff informed her that Ross had phoned to ask for the forms as quickly as possible, to send to contributors impatient to use them. Isaiah Berlin sent his donation to Rosenstock, as Treasurer of the Fund, in October 1964, through N.M. Rothschild & Sons, but this attracted the attention of H.M. Inspector of Taxes, who demanded a copy of the rules of the Fund, as evidence of the charitable purposes for which it would be used.

In July 1966, Werner M. Behr wrote to Pearson, enclosing a cheque for \$50 from Fred Lang of Illinois, USA. A note of admiration for the response aroused by the Fund crept into Doris Pearson's customary businesslike style: 'The way in which new donors are still coming forward from time to time to add their contribution to the Fund is really rather impressive', she wrote in her reply to Behr. She would probably also have been impressed by a letter she received in August 1965 from the eminent Classical scholar Günther Zuntz (Figure 1),¹ Professor of Hellenistic Greek at the University of Manchester, saying somewhat sharply that he had learnt about the Fund only from Lord Robbins's presidential address² and asking to be put in touch with the Fund's Treasurer: 'For I want to do my modest bit.' Donations were also received in the form of bequests. It was a source of pride to the AJR that shortly before his death in London in 1965, the internationally known economist, political scientist and government adviser Moritz J. Bonn had stipulated in a codicil to his will that a substantial legacy should go to the Fund; Bonn had been one of the first German scholars to be appointed to a university position in Britain after 1933.

In an article in *AJR Information* of April 1965, Rosenstock responded at some length to critics of the Fund who argued that the refugees had already amply repaid any debt that they might owe Britain, through their contribution to the war effort and subsequently to British society generally, and that the Fund was excessive as an expression of gratitude; some felt that the refugees owed no debt to Britain at all, in the light of British policy before 1945 on immigration into both Palestine and the UK. The arguments presented on both sides here gave every appearance of emanating from entrenched positions based on strongly held views. On the one hand stood those who felt a sense of gratitude to Britain, who had settled by and large happily and integrated by and large smoothly into British society and who felt at ease with their part-British identity; and on the other hand stood those who felt that Britain had admitted them grudgingly and in insufficient numbers, that British society had hardly gone out of its way to make them feel welcome – most obviously in the mass internment of refugees as 'enemy aliens' in summer 1940 – and who preserved a sense of alienation and marginality in their daily life in Britain. Volume 3 of Isaiah Berlin's collected

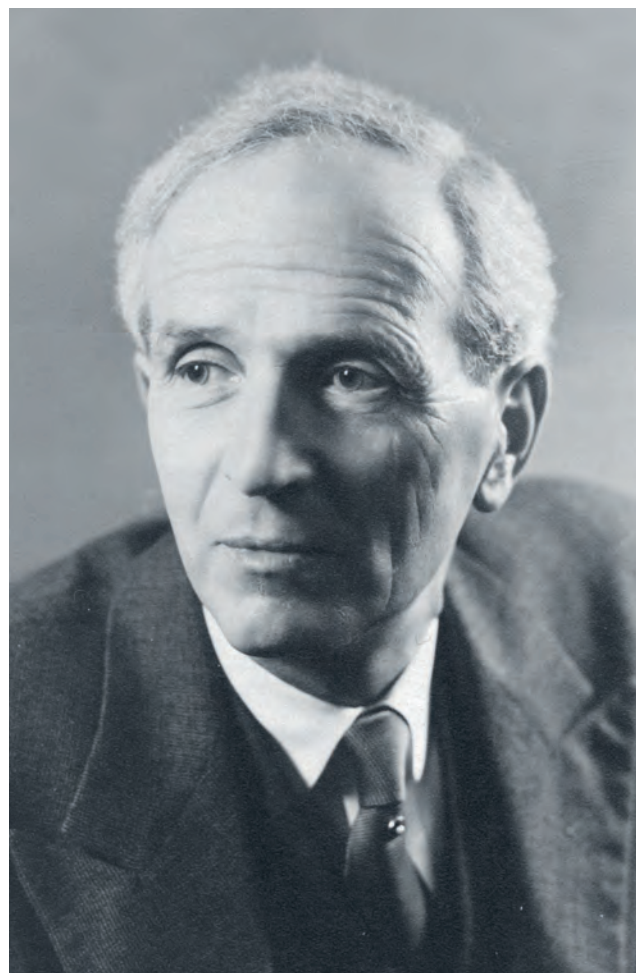


Figure 1
The classical scholar Günther Zuntz FBA (1902-1992) left Germany for Denmark in 1934, before moving on to Britain in 1939, shortly before the outbreak of war.

letters contains two letters in reply to letters he had received from Ernest Rose (Rosenheim), a refugee critical of the Fund; Berlin was unusually blunt in his rebuttal of Rose's charges against Britain, denying that British pre-war immigration policy had been ungenerous, and comparing the internment of refugees in 1940 favourably with the record of other nations that had detained Jews.

Overall, however, one cannot help being impressed by the sheer number of refugees who contributed to the Fund, and the amount they gave, which in the end came to over £96,000, or about £1 million in today's money. That was a remarkable sum for a community of some 50,000 people who had mostly arrived as impoverished refugees in the later 1930s and had had barely twenty years of peacetime conditions to build up a degree of prosperity. The April 1965 issue of *AJR Information* carried as an appendix a list of donors to the Fund. This ran to five solid pages of names, with six columns per page, totalling some 3,000 contributors. It did not include those who wished to remain anonymous and those whose contributions came in later, who together would have increased the final total substantially; in early 1966 that reached 4,500. Famous names included Anna and Ernst Freud; scholars like Francis Carsten,

1. Günther Zuntz was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1956.

2. Lord Robbins, 'Presidential Address, 7 July 1965', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 51, 39-46 at p. 42.

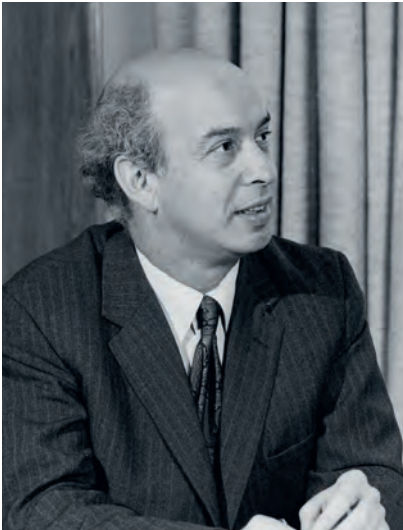


Figure 2
The social statistician Claus Moser FBA (1922-2015) moved to Britain from Germany in 1936. He delivered the 2004 Thank-Offering to Britain Fund Lecture, on 'The Future of Our Universities'.



Figure 3
The law scholar Otto Kahn-Freund FBA (1900-1979) came to Britain from Germany in 1933. He gave a series of three Thank-Offering to Britain Fund Lectures in 1978, on the subject of 'Labour Relations'.

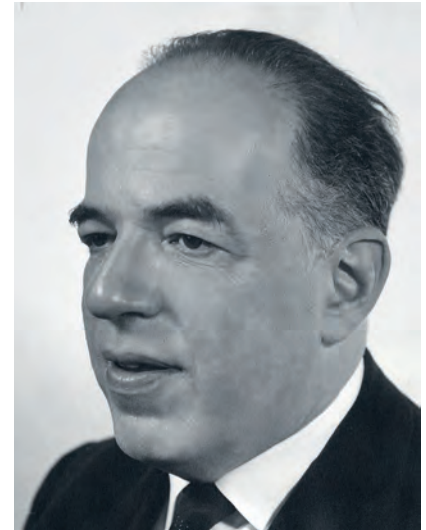


Figure 4
The art historian Ernst Gombrich FBA (1909-2001) came to Britain from Vienna in the 1930s.

Eduard Fraenkel, Ernst Gombrich (Figure 4), Otto Kahn-Freund (Figure 3) and Claus Moser (Figure 2);³ scientists like Hans Kornberg, Nicholas Kurti, Heinz London and Max Perutz; Mosco Carner, Peter Gellhorn, Franz Reizenstein and Peter Stadlen from the musical world; and the cartoonist Vicky (Victor Weisz), the industrialist

3. The historian Francis Carsten was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1971, the classicist Eduard Fraenkel in 1941, the art historian Ernst Gombrich in 1960, the lawyer Otto Kahn-Freund in 1965, and the social statistician Claus Moser in 1969.

Mac Goldsmith, the actor Martin Miller, and the rabbis Ignaz Maybaum and Jakob Kokotek. But most significant were the serried ranks of ordinary refugees who formed the vast majority of the contributors; as many of them represented entire families, the number of donors came to form a substantial proportion of the refugee community. The most common surnames in the list were the classic German-Jewish names Stern, Rosenthal and Goldschmidt (if one includes its anglicised version, Goldsmith).

Extracts from speeches given at the handing-over ceremony of the 'Thank-You Britain' Fund, 8 November 1965

Address by Sir Hans A. Krebs FRS

To me has fallen the privilege of handing over a cheque to the President of the British Academy. This cheque and the efforts leading up to it are no more than a token, a small token, of the deep sense of indebtedness harboured by all of us who came to this country as refugees and were given here a new home – not merely a shelter, but a true home.

What this country of our adoption gave us was not just a new home and livelihood. What we also found was a new and better way of life, a society whose attitudes to life were in many ways very different from what we had been accustomed to, and, I dare say, accustomed to not only under Nazi rule. Coming from an atmosphere of political oppression and persecution, of hate and violence, of lawlessness, blackmail and intrigue, we found here a spirit of friendliness, humanity, tolerance and fairness. We found a society where people of many different dispositions, races, convictions and abilities lived together harmoniously and yet vigorously.

We saw them argue without quarrelling, quarrel without suspecting, suspect without abusing, criticise without vilifying or ridiculing, praise without flattering, being vehement without being brutal.

Address by Lord Robbins, President of the British Academy

I find this a very notable and, for me, a very moving occasion. The arrival here in the inter-war period of those of you who came from Nazi persecution was a painful symptom of what was going on in Central Europe – episode after episode, culminating in outrages more frightful than have ever before occurred in civilised history. But it was a circumstance which brought great benefit to this country, great benefit in the world of scientific and humane learning, great benefit in music and the arts, and in technical and economic affairs, and not only here indeed, but also throughout the remaining free world ... Speaking personally, as an academic, I would like to testify to these benefits, to the life-enhancing stimulus which the arrival of Continental scholars brought to the faculty of those universities which were fortunate enough to be in a position to afford them asylum.

Lectures and Fellowships

The money raised by the Fund was formally handed over to the British Academy at a ceremony on 8 November 1965, in the appropriately grand setting of Saddlers' Hall, just off Cheapside in the heart of the City. The date was doubtless chosen to be as close as possible to the anniversary of the pogroms of 9-10 November 1938. At the ceremony, Sir Hans Krebs formally handed over the cheque in the name of the refugees to Lord Robbins, who accepted it on behalf of the British Academy (Figure 5). Victor Ross and Werner M. Behr, co-chairmen of the 'Thank-You Britain' Fund Committee, signed the document giving the proceeds of the Fund to the Academy 'to be used for the award of research fellowships in the field of the humanities and the holding of an annual lecture.'

Twenty-three 'Thank-Offering to Britain' lectures have been held, starting in 1966, when Lord Robbins spoke on the subject 'Of Academic Freedom'. Among the lecturers were such outstanding public figures as Roy Jenkins, Ralf Dahrendorf, Conor Cruise O'Brien, Arnold Goodman, William Armstrong, Robert Blake and Stuart Hampshire, as well as three refugees, Arthur Koestler, Otto Kahn-Freund and, in 2004, Claus Moser.⁴ The first Research Fellowship was awarded in 1967; it has become one of the most prestigious awards in the arts and social sciences and has been awarded to numerous leading scholars in their fields. Recent recipients include Patricia Clavin, for work on the League of Nations, Alexander Lingas, for research into Byzantine chant, building on the work of the refugee musicologist Egon Wellesz, and Eugene Rogan, for his study of the Middle Eastern and North African theatres of war, 1914-20.



Figure 5
Ceremony to hand over the 'Thank-You Britain' Fund, 8 November 1965. From left to right: Lord Robbins, President of the British Academy; Mr Werner M. Behr; Professor Sir Hans A. Krebs FRS. Photo: *Jewish Chronicle*.

To mark the 50th Anniversary of the Thank-Offering to Britain Fund, an appeal has been launched to raise further donations to strengthen the Fund for future years. Patrons include Lord (John) Krebs, son of Sir Hans Krebs, and the late Lord Moser. So far, 130 contributions have already been received – from members of the Association of Jewish Refugees and others. For more details, or to make a gift, please contact Jennifer Hawton, Development Officer ([020 7969 5258](tel:02079695258), j.hawton@britac.ac.uk).

4. A list of the Thank-Offering to Britain Fund Lectures can be found at www.britishacademy.ac.uk/lectures/tob.cfm

The President's chair

KAREN SYRETT



Figure 1
The 'President's chair', originally designed by William Holman Hunt, and given to the British Academy by his widow.

At meetings of the British Academy's Council, the President sits at the table in an ornate wooden chair, designed in a medieval style, bearing the letters 'H H' on it (Figure 1). But why does the Academy have such an unusual piece of furniture? A letter recently found in the archives throws some light on the matter.

The letter (Figure 4), dated 5 February 1930, is addressed to 'My dearest "IG"' – the Academy's Secretary, Sir Israel Gollancz. It is from Edith Holman Hunt, who explains that she wishes the Academy to have this chair 'with my beloved's initials upon it, for use in your Council Chamber ... as my tribute to the Instruction and Delight I have derived from the British Academy'.

Edith (Figure 2) was the second wife of William Holman Hunt (1827-1910), one of the artists who founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Holman Hunt's first wife was Edith's older sister, Fanny Waugh, who died in childbirth in 1866. Edith and William were married in 1875: however, English law at the time proscribed union with the sister of a deceased wife, and the couple therefore had to marry abroad.

William Holman Hunt joined the Royal Academy Schools in 1844. Whilst there, he met John Everett Millais and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and together they founded the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in 1848. The Brotherhood was a reaction to what the artists believed was the triviality of British art. In contrast, the group aimed to revive simplicity, truth and seriousness.

In the mid-1850s, Holman Hunt decided to turn his talents to furniture design, thereby starting a new trend amongst his circle of friends. In his memoir, Holman Hunt describes how he came to design the chair now owned by the Academy (Figure 3):

In furnishing my new house I was determined, as far as possible, to eschew the vulgar furniture of the day. Articles for constant practical use were somewhat regulated by necessity; but in the living rooms I could exercise control. For ordinary seats Windsor chairs satisfied me,



Figure 2
Portrait of Edith by her husband William Holman Hunt.



Figure 3
'Chairs designed by W.H.H.', showing in the middle what would become the British Academy President's chair.

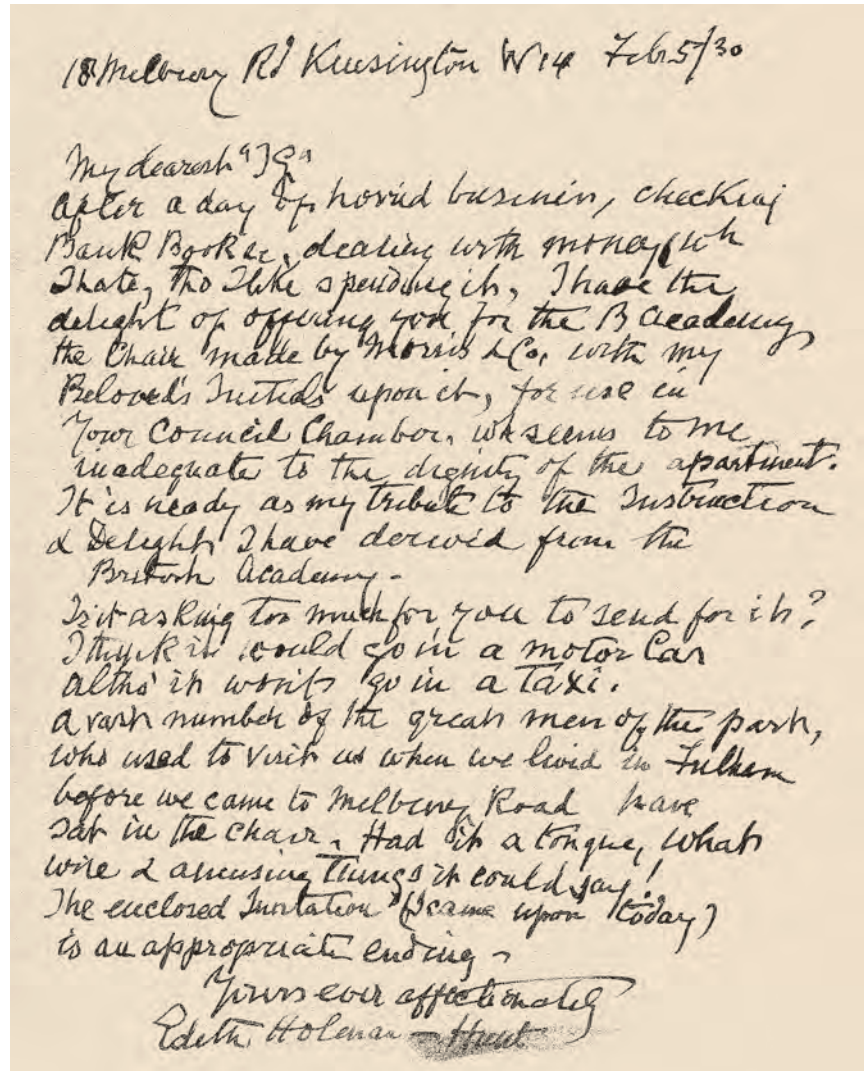


Figure 4
Edith Holman Hunt to Israel Gollancz, Secretary of the British Academy, 5 February 1930 (BA 360).

but I kept this in countenance by a handsome arm-chair of old English form, and devised an ornamental scroll and shield, with my monogram to give it individuality. [After designing other pieces] I had here to restrain further expenditure, still, I had done as much as I could to prove my theory that the designing of furniture is the legitimate work of the artist. When I showed my small group of household joys to my P.R.B. [Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood] friends the contagion spread ...¹

Edith concludes her letter to Gollancz by saying: 'A vast number of the great men of the past, who used to visit us when we lived in Fulham before we came to Melbury Road have sat in the chair. Had it a tongue, what wise and amusing things it could say!' So, with such a history, what better chair can there be for our Presidents to sit in?

1. William Holman Hunt, *Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (2nd edition, 1914), vol 2 (available at www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/nd467.h9.1914.2.rad.html), pp. 106-7. Figures 3 and 4 are also from the same source (pp. 265 and 106, respectively).

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