

## Reports on Recent Work

The following examples are taken from progress reports received during the period of this *Review*, on work funded by the Academy. They give an indication of the range of activity supported. Some grants are awarded to enable essential groundwork for a longer-term endeavour to be accomplished, with the main fruits of the research expected further down the line. Such projects may have a gradually phased output in terms of publication or other dissemination. Other projects are designed with a more immediate outcome in mind, where publication, often in article form, can be expected within a relatively short period of the primary research being completed. Conferences, of course, have their natural flowering in a one-off occasion, which may or may not result in published proceedings in due course.

### Research Grants

#### Archaeological investigation of a Cromwellian shipwreck off Duart Point, Mull

As a Scottish-based scholar, Dr C.J.M. Martin was awarded a grant through the Academy's Transitional Fund (pending the fully UK-wide coverage of the AHRB, which has since been achieved). The project involved the excavation of part of a small Cromwellian warship lost in a storm in 1653, while suppressing a royalist revolt in the West Highlands. The ship was rediscovered in 1979 and is now designated a 'protected wreck'. Documentary research has identified the wreck as that of the *Swan*, a vessel built for Charles I in 1641. The ship was copied from a Flushing privateer in an attempt to counter piracy in the Channel approaches and the Irish Sea. She may therefore be seen as a very early prototype of the frigate.

A two-month season took place in the summer, the Academy's grant providing funds for diving time and post-excavation study. Some 121 finds and samples were delivered to the National Museums of Scotland. Two items of exceptional importance were noted: a substantially complete naval guncarriage, and an elegant panelled door, apparently complete. The excavation of these items raises questions of archaeological methodology and subsequent treatment, and they will be dealt with next summer; in the meantime, the area has been secured with sandbags for protection during the winter.

It is becoming evident that this small royal warship demonstrates the same kind of lavish decorative extravagance as that with which the *Sovereign of the Seas* (another of Charles I's ships) had been embellished and which drew much contemporary criticism. The *Swan* wreck is thus a microcosm not only of contemporary naval architecture, warfare and shipboard life, but of Charles I's vision of his navy as an expression of kingly prestige.

*A documentary on the Swan was recently shown on BBC 2. Interim reports and articles have also been published in the International Journal of Nautical Archaeology and elsewhere. Dr Martin is Reader in Maritime Studies at the University of St Andrews*

#### The Geography of Unemployment in Britain: Persistence and Change

Dr R.L. Martin was awarded a small research grant to support his direct research costs whilst he held a one year 'Thank-Offering to Britain' Fellowship. (The Fellowship was endowed from the proceeds of a 'Thank-you Britain Appeal', initiated by the Association of Jewish Refugees as a mark of gratitude to Britain for its provision of a home for Jews persecuted by the Nazi regime.) Dr Martin used his research grant to purchase and process datasets. His study considered how the incidence of unemployment has varied between different regions and different localities across Britain between 1970 and the present. One amongst many of his findings demonstrated that joblessness in some areas, particularly the traditionally high-unemployment areas, has come to be underestimated owing to the substantial increase in the number of adult members of the labour force registered as sick (which takes them off the official unemployment statistics). The perceived narrowing of the spatial unemployment disparities since the end of the 1980s may therefore be misleading.

Dr Martin concludes that, in combination, his findings on a number of factors demonstrate that the changes in the local geographies of unemployment have more to do with shifting incidence of economic development and net job creation than with local problems of labour market inflexibility. Dislocations caused by uneven economic restructuring and development – increasingly determined by external global pressures – are the fundamental factor behind the continuities and changes in the map of unemployment.

*Several publications have emanated from the research, and others are in preparation, including a book on Labour Market Geography for Polity Press. Dr Martin is Reader in Economic Geography at the University of Cambridge*

#### Giotto's design of the Arena Chapel, Padua

Dr L. Jacobus was awarded a research grant to investigate the design history of the Arena Chapel, clarifying the relationships between the building and the frescoes within it. Dr Jacobus's preliminary researches indicated that there were at least three changes to the design of the building at its east end, and each of these changes had implications for the design of the frescoes. Following detailed scrutiny of the Chapel in two separate trips to Padua, and inspection of related archives, Dr Jacobus has been able to establish that Giotto was closely involved in the design of the architecture of the Arena Chapel and his design originally included a stained glass window at the Chapel's East End (soon replaced by a hinged panel, with an image of God the Father by another hand). She has further established a case to suggest that the frescoes on the chancel arch featuring scenes from the Annunciation were especially designed to provide a visual accompaniment to the divine office celebrated on the Feast of the Annunciation (or Golden Mass).

Accounts survive of the 'plays' with music that were re-enacted on the Feast day, and of the liturgical vestments worn by cleric-actors taking the parts of the Angel and the Virgin. Details of costume and pose in Giotto's frescoes suggest that the figure of the Virgin Annunciate may be understood as an actor 'performing' in the Golden Mass. At other times of the year, however, the fresco may be read unproblematically within

the sequence of frescoes of *The Life of the Virgin*. Detailed examination of the effects produced by natural and artificial light falling on the frescoes highlight certain aspects of the drama. In its original condition, gilded rays were scored into the plaster, radiating from around the Angel, and pouring down on the Virgin Annunciate. Dr Jacobus suggests it is possible to reconstruct something of the Mass that took place. The Angel and the Virgin could be seen immediately below the window. Soon, choristers' voices would be heard singing their dialogue, beginning with the words 'Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum'. The morning light, pouring through the stained glass image of God the Father, would be mystically transformed into a visual emanation of the Holy Spirit. Giotto's figures became animated by sound and light, performers in a synaesthetic spectacle unlike any other Golden Mass. Dr Jacobus suggests that her interpretation of the *Annunciation* enhances our understanding not only of Giotto's creative achievement in the design and decoration of the Chapel, but also of the ways in which medieval art could excite devotion in its beholders.

*Dr Jacobus is a Lecturer in History of Art at Birkbeck College, London. She has published four articles on the Arena Chapel, and is preparing a full-length book on the subject.*

## Conferences

### Women and Brainpower

The British Academy provided a grant to help Royal Holloway present a conference focusing on women's contribution to intellectual life. The conference, organised by Professor P.J. Corfield, considered such questions as whether there were essential, biologically-derived differences in brainpower between men and women, or whether their roles were socially-constructed; whether the arrival of female brainpower had changed the ethos of intellectual life and, if so, in what ways; and whether J.S. Mill's analysis was still the most relevant one: educating women simply doubled a nation's intellectual capital. The conference sought to answer not the Freudian question 'What do women want?' but instead 'How do women think?'

Contributions included discussions of the different ways in which societies have dealt with the bodily dimension of women's experiences, for example how new mothers and post-menopausal women have been regarded; the *salons* of eighteenth-century France; the presence of women in anti-vivisectionist movements and the range of Victorian explanations, from the 'essentialist' claims that women were sentimental hysterics, to celebrations of women's sympathy with other oppressed groups (non-humans); and the opposition to higher education for women, amongst many other themes.

*The conference coincided with the 150th anniversary of the foundation of Bedford College for Women in 1849, and the opening of the new Bedford Centre for the History of Women.*

### The Past and Present of Leprosy

A conference on the modern and archaeological contexts of leprosy was held at the University of Bradford in the summer. The Academy provided assistance with the air fares to bring over three scholars from the Czech Republic, who would otherwise have been unable to attend. All three scholars have written in the most appreciative terms of the opportunity to share their research with scholars from over 20 different countries, from Russia, through Vietnam, to South America. They showed how their researches related to archaeological data, and it was, indeed, under this aspect of the subject that the Academy's backing had been sought.

*Clinical leprosy, the medical and social history, palaeopathology, immunology, epidemiology and microbiology of leprosy were all represented at the congress. The papers and posters will be published in due course.*

### Alfred the Great Eleventh-century Conference

On the occasion of the 1100th anniversary of Alfred's death, the University of Southampton hosted a major interdisciplinary conference reassessing his life and achievements. Contributions included new judgements about Alfred's reign based on new metalwork and coin discoveries; and on new work on the laws and his translations. Scholars debated whether Alfred's reign was characterised by continuity or innovation; whether he drew on insular precedents or continental exemplars. Some saw parallels between Alfred and contemporary Celtic, Frankish and Bulgarian rulers which probably owed as much to common preoccupations and Biblical study as to direct contact and exchange of ideas. The major gap which emerged was between those who were impressed with the immensity of Alfred's achievements, and others who felt that there was a surface gloss which concealed botched and incomplete work, which might indicate that Alfred knew what he wanted to have done, but did not have the time or means to achieve it. For example, the sense of purpose in the lawcode conflicts with its poor internal organisation, which would have made it difficult to use in practice. The differing views made for stimulating discussion, and the varying perspectives will be made available in the published proceedings.

*The Chairman of the Conference, Professor Timothy Reuter, commented that the 1999 views of Alfred's reign will not only be strikingly different from those prevalent when his millenary was celebrated in 1901, but have developed significantly from those aired at the 1100th anniversary of his accession in 1971.*