10 YEARS OF THE AHRC
A DECADE OF SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE IN ARTS AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH
The AHRC is marking its tenth anniversary in 2015 through a number of activities to showcase the achievements of the arts and humanities research community over the last decade, to look forward to the coming decade and to celebrate the role of the arts and humanities in all areas of our national life.

For further information: www.ahrc.ac.uk/ahrc10
A DECADE OF SUPPORTING EXCELLENCE IN ARTS AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH

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As the arts and humanities often remind us, a decade is barely the blink of an eye in the grand sweep of things. And yet, in the span of a human life, ten years is of course not an inconsiderable length of time - time enough, indeed, for work to begin, for patterns to be set, for challenges to be met and for successes to be won.

Ten years ago the AHRC received its Royal Charter. It was an achievement not without its obstacles (see page 6), but it was an achievement secured by the sustained and committed efforts of many within the arts and humanities - as well as our many friends beyond - who argued that the arts and humanities both needed and deserved a Research Council, with the sustained and targeted investment that this would bring.

It is perhaps for others to say whether the hopes and the trust invested in us a decade ago have been repaid or not, but perhaps this anniversary publication can help remind us of those many things we have to celebrate, whether they be those projects that have inspired and impacted on new and increasingly diverse audiences, doctoral students or early career researchers achieving extraordinary things at the very outset of their careers, senior research leaders guiding their subject areas into new and interconnected fields, programmes and areas of work that have galvanized whole disciplines and communities of interest.

What it illustrates above all is that the story of the AHRC in the last decade simply is the story of the thousands of arts and humanities researchers who, like those featured in this publication, have asked and answered new questions about our human world and who continue to do so.

Like any anniversary, the AHRC’s tenth gives us the opportunity to pause and reflect and this has been an important feature of this past year. But paradoxically perhaps an anniversary is as much about the future as it is about the past. It’s a time to renew commitments, after all, to refresh and reinvigorate and to build for the future, and we hope this will be an important legacy of our tenth anniversary.

So, while looking through this publication and reflecting on the distance the AHRC and the wider community has travelled in this relatively short time, we should certainly celebrate what together we have achieved, but we should also take time to think about the future and its challenges and what we still have left to do.

Professor Sir Drummond Bone
Chairman, AHRC
Interdisciplinary work is very close to my heart, and I felt that it was something that we could develop much more positively”

New kids grow up quickly

Professor Rick Rylance became CEO of the AHRC in 2009. Here he reflects on the AHRC’s achievements in its first ten years

What changed when the AHRC became a Research Council?

When the AHRC was formed I was a strong supporter of it. It seemed to me that there was an advocacy role to be had, which would be easier from the inside than the outside. Becoming a Research Council was a recognition of the esteem we were held in, and a demonstration that the Government was taking an interest in the arts and humanities. It showed that we were now in the mainstream.

Does the move to join the other Research Councils in Swindon fit in with that – a move away from the idea of the AHRC as being exceptional?

Yes. The main reason I supported the move from Bristol in 2010 was to get into the mainstream of Research Council work. I never bought the argument that we would suffer by adjacency to the other Councils: we’ve strengthened our position by the association.

As well as being the CEO of the AHRC, you’ve also been the Chair of the RCUK Executive Group for the last four years. What’s the role of the AHRC in the broader research landscape?

One thing I did early on was to get my senior team to engage themselves as thoroughly as possible with the work of RCUK and the other Research Councils. That’s something I’m really proud of – it was a matter of deliberate policy, to get ourselves involved. And it’s had significant collateral benefits, around the way that we engage people and the way we develop common projects, and in making arts and humanities expertise, and the AHRC, much more prominent.

So there’s been an increasing emphasis on collaboration, during your time at AHRC?

Yes – interdisciplinary work is very close to my heart, and I felt that it was something that we could develop much more positively.

So the other side of the coin is – what’s distinctive about the AHRC, what sets it apart?

First there’s the kind of expertise we bring. Historical perspectives, insights into behavioural motivations, and asking what culture adds to communities or whole populations, which can contribute to good health and wellbeing.

Then there’s our kind of analytic take on shared problems. There’s a humanities way of looking at the world – historicising, contextualising, taking an interest in processes that are of long duration, or that are complex and sometimes ambiguous, and having a different kind of approach to evidence and data-gathering. That’s what other organisations value.

Have you noticed changes in the way that the AHRC is perceived?

I have, for all sorts of reasons. We as a community and as an organisation have got better at giving an account of ourselves. Then there’s the fact that the Creative Economy has become the UK’s fastest-expanding sector, growing at rates that are inconceivable in other parts of the economy: that’s given our voice weight. And there’s our visible presence in the way that we fund things in the public sphere: through museum exhibitions, TV programmes, and films that get nominated for Oscars, for example (See page 51).

Is it fair to say that the AHRC has a different ‘personality’ from the other Councils?

We do have the personality of the new kid on the block, though new kids grow up quickly. We still have a freshness of approach.

A lot of people say that the AHRC is brave – taking a chance with projects that you don’t know will pay off. Do you agree?

I guess if we’re brave, it’s in ways that aren’t that different from the other Research Councils, which also make long-term investments. But there is a kind of bravery about what we do, insofar as we’re willing to try new developmental possibilities.

We’ve thought a lot about how, in the UK, we have an outstanding research base in the arts and humanities, by international comparison. And we have a Creative Economy which seems to be outstripping the rest of the planet. Our cultural sector, meanwhile, is the envy of the world – our theatre, our museums, our music. How do we try to bring those pedigree achievements, this cultural and creative infrastructure, and this research base together?

We came to the conclusion that you can’t do that by simply issuing an orthodox call for research proposals and hoping for the best. You’ve got to intervene creatively.

So what do you think the AHRC’s main achievements have been, over the last decade?

In no particular order, there’s our contribution to our understanding of our history, our culture, our belief systems, our art, our capacities as a nation, and the skills we need, from heritage and archaeology through to modern languages. It’s that understanding of ourselves, and the way we contribute to it.

There’s also our international presence. We’re very prominent in Europe – we lead
I’m particularly proud of the New Generation Thinkers initiative – giving young researchers the means to engage in their own research and ways of communicating what they’ve done.

What underpins all of this is partnership and collaboration. Other organisations want to work with us. The people who are active in the museums community or the Creative Economy want to talk to us. The trade bodies, such as music associations, want to get involved with us. It’s now understood not only that we have significant presence, but also significant expertise in looking at the problems that these organisations are interested in.

This prominence, plus our willingness to convene partnerships and collaborations, and our ability to get people to work together, have been major strengths for us.

The best thing we’ve done is put the arts and humanities on the map

Jill Mustard is the AHRC’s longest-serving member of staff. In fact, her involvement stretches even further back, to the early days of the AHRB. ‘It was Christmas Eve 1998 when I signed my contract,’ she recalls. ‘There were boxes of grant applications around the office and we had to find reviewers for them. There was no Peer Review College such as we have now (see page 80). We had to phone up academics and ask them if they could review an application. Luckily we managed to find two reviewers for each application but it wasn’t easy.’

The AHRB was situated in two locations at the time, with Research at the HEFCE offices in Bristol and Postgraduate at the British Academy in London. The move to central Bristol in 2001 brought the two offices together for the first time. ‘There’s never been a time when we haven’t been going through change. But this has helped to keep me here all this time. It’s like the Chinese curse: may you live in interesting times! And there will be many more to come, I’m sure.’

For Jill, the variety of the work and the sense of involvement have also been important to her work. ‘We’ve always had input into what’s going on and we’ve had the chance to get to know academics. Many of those who worked with us in the early days have now retired but others have taken their place. Nothing has stood still.’

And what of the AHRC’s achievements in that time? ‘The best thing we’ve done is to put the arts and humanities on the map,’ says Jill. ‘Of course we’re still increasing our profile, but that’s quite an achievement.’
Professor Geoffrey Crossick was Chief Executive of the AHRB from 2002 to 2005. He wrote this article for the AHRB’s magazine Arcady in 2005 and, opposite, he reflects on the distance travelled since then.

A RESEARCH COUNCIL – AT LAST!

Historians are notoriously bad on dates, but I doubt that I shall forget 22 January 2003. The Government’s White Paper on higher education policy in England was due to appear that day, so too was the statement of the Government and the devolved administrations announcing that a UK-wide Arts and Humanities Research Council would finally be set up, and the Grant Letter from the DfES to HEFCE was to be made public and with it our financial settlement. The AHRB’s Research Committee happened to be meeting that morning in London and its Chairman gave me unique dispensation to keep my mobile phone switched on.

We had known since the autumn that an AHRC was to be established, and it was only the delays in finalising the White Paper which held up the announcement. I don’t know whether the story is true that the two paragraphs about the AHRC were the only ones to remain unaltered as draft followed draft, but it may well be. So, by the time 22 January had arrived, I must admit that my main feeling was one of wanting to get the announcement made so that we could move on to the next stage.

Research Committee had reached item seven on its agenda when my phone rang. I swiftly left the room. It was Steve Morgan, our Associate Director of Evaluation and Analytical Services on the phone. He was watching the Secretary of State on television and Charles Clarkes had just told the House of Commons of the Government’s intention to establish an Arts and Humanities Research Council. I went back into the room and repeated the message that I had just received. Everyone burst into applause and the applause went on. I must admit that I was taken by surprise but very agreeably so. We in the AHRB had become so used to the fact that an AHRC was going to be set up, so frustrated at the delays in making the announcement, that we had lost sight of the important issue that the academics on our Research Committee had remembered. That this was a truly historic moment for arts and humanities research in the United Kingdom. A moment worthy of our applause.”
joined the Arts & Humanities Research Board (AHRB) as Chief Executive just after my predecessor, David Eastwood, had obtained government commitment to our becoming a full research council. I was struck, reading the article in *Arcady*, by just how prosaic it makes it all seem.

These were actually very challenging political times. Establishing the AHRC required primary legislation and we were part of the higher education bill that also established variable tuition fees. Those who remember those parliamentary battles will recall that the AHRC was therefore only set up by a five vote margin! Furthermore, the AHRB was funded separately by each of the four UK governments, and a UK-wide AHRC meant the first return of powers to Westminster from Edinburgh since devolution. The Scottish government was supportive but we needed to make sure that the strong voice of Scottish academics made it politically easy for them to remain so.

The bigger task during those years was to ensure that creating an AHRC was seen as the start rather than the end of a process. I visited universities round the UK, on occasions two in a week, to ensure that the idea of an AHRC was welcomed by academics and senior managements. Academics were mostly positive, but some were anxious that as a Research Council we’d be far more susceptible to government pressure. My response was to build a picture of the benefits – cross-disciplinary working, better funding, a place at research policy-making tables – while acknowledging the anxiety. ‘I’d much prefer having to handle the pressure because the arts and humanities were regarded as important,’ I’d say, ‘than not have pressure because no-one thought we mattered.’

The nascent AHRC had to be embedded within the overall Research Council world. I look back with gratitude and admiration at the way the chief executives of the Research Councils welcomed the arts and humanities; some out of intuitive good will while others needed persuasion that we enriched the research landscape, while Ian Diamond at ESRC was a solid friend throughout. It was exciting to discuss cross-council programmes at a time when these were new and responding to cross-disciplinary intellectual possibilities.

It was also important to remind government of why they’d decided to establish an AHRC, that our disciplines would bring new dimensions of understanding and quality as well as relevance. I still remember an intimidating 90-minute interrogation between myself and a senior Treasury mandarin about government science strategy and funding plans. It seemed to work but I felt wrung out by the end. Looking back, now that the AHRC is so firmly established as part of the research council world, I’m surprised at just how much we had to do then. As Rick Rylance has had to do to keep us moving forward in recent years. What is hard to recollect is just how new it all felt then. I wouldn’t say that ‘to be young was very heaven’, but it was fun.

“...It was exciting to discuss cross-council programmes at a time when these were new and responding to cross-disciplinary intellectual possibilities”

The bigger task during those years was to ensure that creating an AHRC was seen as the start rather than the end of a process”
“Jenny now uses her position to encourage her students to apply to the IPS scheme.”

Intellectual Capitol

Thanks to an AHRC scheme that began in 2005, doctoral students and early career researchers have been able to study in some of the most prestigious research institutions around the world, laying the foundations for their future careers. Ten years ago Jenny Woodley was among the first of them supported by the ESRC, which, since 2006, has provided funded research fellowships at world-leading international research institutions, for academics in the early stages of their careers. In the first year of her PhD, Jenny spent three months living in Washington, working at the Library of Congress’s Kluge Centre.

‘For the first time, I really felt like a researcher. And if you’re going to jump into the world of research, there’s no better place to do it than the Library of Congress. You got your own desk, sitting amongst the distinguished scholars. And I remember being amazed that you could order books online, and someone would bring them to you. They’d appear on your desk – for a lowly PhD student, it was pretty incredible.’

Celluloid struggle

Jenny was working in the archives of the civil rights organisation, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, looking especially at the NAACP’s campaign in the Thirties and Forties, to improve the way that black people were depicted in Hollywood movies. The NAACP’s Executive Secretary, Walter White, had lobbied studio executives and other prominent figures in the film industry, telling them that the restriction of Negroes to roles with rolling eyes, chattering teeth, always scared of ghosts, or to portrayals of none-too-bright servants, perpetuates a stereotype which is doing the Negro infinite harm.’

White met with mixed success – the producer Darryl Zanuck, he reported to a friend, had ‘marched up and down puffing a cigar, and stopped to declaim: “I make one sixth of the pictures made in Hollywood, and I never thought of this until you presented the facts.”’ The film that Zanuck produced next, Crash Dive, featured a much more positive portrayal of a black submarine crew member.

But White also faced opposition, sometimes from surprising quarters. While Gone with the Wind producer David O. Selznick was sympathetic, for example, Hattie McDaniel, who played Mammy in the film (a role for which she would win an Academy Award, becoming the first African American performer to do so) reacted angrily to what she saw as White’s interference. McDaniel, who had made her career playing the maid

‘Working in the humanities, you’re used to the idea that the monetary value of your research might not be immediately apparent,’ says Jenny Woodley, who is a Lecturer in Modern History at Nottingham Trent University. ‘But walking up Capitol Hill in Washington every day, to work in the Library of Congress, gave me a huge sense of excitement. The grandeur of the buildings seemed to say something about the importance of scholarship, and that sense, of the value of research, has stayed with me.’

Jenny was one of the first researchers to benefit from the AHRC’s International Placement Scheme (the scheme is also
roles that White was so critical of, wrote: ‘since Walter White has been meddling in the affairs of the motion picture industry, work for the Negro has decreased some seventy to seventy five percent.’

For Jenny Woodley, having the chance to study at the Library of Congress had a lasting impact. ‘I think it’s wonderful that the AHRc has been able to give researchers this kind of opportunity, at a formative stage in their careers. I wouldn’t have been able to do a PhD without my AHRC funding and so wouldn’t be an academic now. The IPS scheme not only allowed me to complete crucial research which allowed me to complete my doctorate – and later to publish that research as a monograph – but it also made me feel like a researcher for the first time, and convinced me that this is what I wanted to do with my career!’

Jenny now uses her position at Nottingham Trent to encourage her postgraduate students and potential postgraduates to apply for AHRC funding and the IPS scheme.

Jenny used her research in Washington to explore more widely the issue of the representation of minorities in various media – her PhD was published as Art for Equality: the NAACP’s Cultural Campaign for Civil Rights. And she remains an American specialist, teaching American history, and researching African American history in particular. ‘For a while I was the only Americanist in our department,’ she says. ‘But since Barack Obama became President, we’ve noticed a marked increase in interest among students at Nottingham Trent University, in American history, and the issue of race within it.’

And why should British public money be spent sending a researcher to an American library, to study American history? ‘America’s standing and place in the world means that what happens there affects us. And given America’s cultural dominance, the portrayal of certain groups in American media is important for discussions of race here. As long as Hollywood films remain so popular, it’s vital that we understand them.’

The Library of Congress, the largest library in the world. AHRC-funded postgraduates can spend three to six months studying its unique collections as well as other in other US, Japanese and Chinese organisations.

For the first time, I really felt like a researcher’
Thinking big. The AHRC’s strategic programmes

The idea was a simple one. If we’re to get to grips with the major issues that we face in the twenty-first century – everything from environmental change to the digital revolution, religious radicalism to an ageing population – we can’t rely just on individual researchers to provide us with solutions, or even individual disciplines: we need different subject specialists talking to each other, and coming up with new ideas.

As Professor Evelyn Welch of King’s College London puts it, ‘these are the kind of big questions that can only be answered with big teams of people.’

And in solving some of our most pressing social, economic and cultural problems, the arts and humanities have a vital contribution to make. That’s why, for much of its first ten years, the AHRC funded research through ‘strategic programmes,’ focused on some of the grand challenges of our times.

Feet under the table
The strategic programmes have brought together researchers from different disciplines, as well as partners from outside of academia, and co-ordinated their work around subjects that are of public as well as academic interest. And not just researchers from the arts and humanities: several of the strategic programmes saw the AHRC teaming up with other Research Councils, and so getting scientists on board. Each strategic programme has involved dozens of individual research projects.

For Professor Tom Inns, Director of the Designing for the 21st Century (see page 60), the programmes represented a big step up in terms of using arts and humanities research. ‘For my money, the strategic programmes represent the coming of age of the AHRC, as the “human Research Council”. There’s a Research Council for medicine, and another for economics – the AHRC represents the human dimension in life. It’s about culture, how we see things, how we work together – all the complex aspects of being human.’

For Professor Peter Coates of the University of Bristol, ‘the strategic programmes announced the arrival of the AHRC as a fully-fledged Research Council, with its feet under the table. They really made the case for the AHRC as a serious player, in the kinds of research that have an impact on people’s lives.’

Through this publication, we look at just some of the AHRC’s strategic programmes, and the very significant difference that they’ve made.

Images above, clockwise from top: Hitomi Manaka as Lavinia in Ninagawa’s Japanese Titus Andronicus, part of the RSC Complete Works Festival. Using the festival as a test case, Professor Kathleen McLuskie and a team of experts in education, the arts and business from the University of Birmingham are using an AHRC grant to explore how English literary heritage meets the diverse commercial and educational opportunities of the 21st century.

From ‘Historical Photographs of China’, an AHRC-funded collaboration between scholars at the University of Bristol, University of Lincoln, the Institut d’Asie Orientale and TGE-Adonis.

Dancers in Sierra Leone. The AHRC-funded ‘Reanimating Cultural Heritage’ project explored Sierra Leone’s cultural heritage and the role it might play in post-conflict rehabilitation.

Translation Arrays: version Variation Visualization, funded by the AHRC. Image: Stephen Thiel.

‘Red hand’ – courtesy of the LSE/Runnymede Trust/ Bangla Stories. From the AHRC-funded ‘Bengal Diaspora’ project.
Space technology to ‘heritage smells’: the Science and Heritage Programme

A cross-Council programme drew on expertise from a range of disciplines, impacting on policy, business as well as academia, writes Matt Shinn.

In the UK, we’re very good at understanding and conserving our past. From Faraday surveying the effects of London grime on the paintings in the National Gallery, to research on the environmental conditions in Welsh slate mines, where many of Britain’s cultural treasures were kept for safekeeping during the Second World War, the UK has long been a leading player in heritage science.

But fears that we were losing our pole position prompted the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee to recommend, in 2006, the setting-up of a dedicated programme of funding for science and heritage research, to be supported by the Research Councils. And this led, in 2007, to the launch of the five-year Science and Heritage Programme, which was jointly funded to the tune of £6.9 million by the AHRC and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC).

The programme’s rationale was straightforward. The stuff that makes up our cultural heritage – fragile as it is – faces many challenges, ranging from intensive use for leisure, education and tourism, to the effects of climate change. And heritage science can increase our understanding of the materials that make up our historic buildings, monuments and artworks, and so help us to extend their use.

The programme was led by Professor May Cassar, who is Director of the UCL Institute for Sustainable Heritage. But while the contribution of science in this area is pretty obvious, she says, what’s less immediately apparent is the vital role played by the arts and humanities. And yet, ‘in many cases, the research that we supported was led by arts and humanities questions.’

Picking up the pieces

A good example of how this worked is the project Representing Re-Formation: Reconstructing Renaissance Monuments. Project leader Philip Lindley, Professor of Art History at the University of Leicester, remembers: ‘I was talking to my brilliant colleague, the late George Fraser, Director of the University of Leicester’s Space Research Centre. I was chatting about some work that I wanted to do, trying to create a virtual reconstruction of some tomb monuments [including those of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, and his wife], that had been taken apart in the sixteenth century, and the pieces scattered.’

‘We built a team involving physicists from the Space Research Centre,’ says Philip Lindley, ‘as well as museologists, archaeologists, computer scientists and physicists at the University of Leicester, as well as historians at Merton College, Oxford and at the Yale Centre for British Art, collaborating with curators, conservators, and education and imaging specialists employed by English Heritage and the Norfolk Museums and

“ The AHRC has looked beyond academic communities, to broaden the scope of the arts and humanities”

Science and Heritage in facts and figures

- The programme began in 2007 and ended in 2014
- The programme received £8.1M in funding
- The programme funded 48 projects through 5 competitions including large collaborative grants, research clusters, collaborative doctoral awards and development grants
- 180 researchers were involved and a further 363 researchers from partner organisations in research projects
- 90 HEIs were involved in research projects including 66 UK HEIs
- The programme leveraged 15 new research projects which were funded from outside the programme
- The programme led to an 80% direct increase in research activity – 29 additional research proposals with a further 10 proposals under development (as of April 2013)
- The programme engaged with 50 industry partners in research
- The programme enabled 135 resources to be produced for industry, 184 for academia and 166 for the public
These delicate devices are able to answer questions about the composition, condition and stability of objects.”

Archaeology Service. We used 3D laser scanning of the monuments and the fragments that had come to light. And through it we’ve been able to show what the monument originally looked like – it’s as if the Reformation never happened.’

‘I’d thought that art history had nothing in common with what the space team did,’ says Philip Lindley, ‘but it turned out that many of our challenges are similar. At the same time, they brought new approaches: they routinely asked, for example, how much each of the surviving pieces of the monument weighed. They’re used to calculating the mass of objects, but we hadn’t considered this: and of course, you know that pieces of stone that are more than two men can lift are unlikely to have been moved far from their original position.’

The project led to an exhibition at Thetford Priory, where the fragments of the monument were found, and this led in turn to visitor numbers increasing. There have also been a number of spin-offs from the research: 3-D laser scanning company Europac, for example, have gone on to develop a specialist scanning business working in the arena of culture, arts and design. Enigma Interactive, meanwhile, produced an app for Thetford Priory, enabling visitors to move virtual pieces of the monuments around, and see how they fit together: they have now developed a proof-of-concept app for Boughton House, enabling users to ‘walk back’ into the lost formal gardens of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

**Standard bearer**

The practical achievements of the Science and Heritage Programme include the development of a new environmental standard for cultural heritage collections. Nancy Bell is Head of Collection Care at the National Archives. As a result of the project in which she was involved, she says, the guidance for storing and moving fragile artefacts is now presented ‘in a new way, based on research, and on the underpinning science. It takes more of a risk-based approach, giving an idea of the likelihood of certain outcomes, rather than making rigid prescriptions. The end result is that we have freed up the movement of cultural objects between different locations, making it easier to include them in exhibitions, for example.’

This research led to the production of a BSI Publicly Accessible Standard, PAS 198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections and to the award to Nancy Bell of the Plowden Gold Medal 2015.

Nancy Bell also worked on the Mind the Gap project, which looked at hindrances to collaboration between heritage science researchers and the people who work directly with cultural objects. ‘Encouraging co-operation in this area,’ she says, ‘is largely about managing expectations. We have to make practitioners understand, in particular, that research won’t necessarily give you a defined outcome quickly. There are lots of examples of innovation in heritage science in the Sixties, for example, which are only starting to pay off now. Timelines can be long.’

**Heritage smells**

The Heritage Smells project involved experts in chemistry, physics and statistics, as well as in heritage science and sensor technology, in developing diagnostic olfactory tools for heritage science. By ‘sniffing’ the air, these delicate devices are able to answer questions about the composition, condition and stability of objects, giving curators important information about how items should be stored, displayed and preserved in the long term (as well as protecting the health of people who come into contact with them). The sensors that were developed are relatively low-cost, and they are hand-held, meaning that they’re easy to use, and within

“we’ve been able to show what the monument originally looked like”
The end result is that we have freed up the movement of cultural objects between different locations.

Heritage sounds
Among a number of Science and Heritage projects that looked at intangible aspects of heritage, two were focused on acoustics – how monuments were designed to sound, and may have sounded in the past. One, the Improving Heritage Experience through Acoustic Reality and Audio Research, or I-HE(AR)^2 [I Hear Too] project, involved a programme of sound works, installations, demos and interactive audio events held in and around York Minster, using acoustic technology to show how the design of the building affects sound within it. Another, the Research Cluster for the Investigation of Acoustic and Musical Elements of Prehistoric Archaeological Sites in Britain, looked at the acoustic environment of prehistoric caves, and monuments like Stonehenge, helping to bring them to life. This project reached a wide audience, when it was featured on the BBC Radio Four programme Hearing the Past.

Valuing the past
For May Cassar, the achievements of the Science and Heritage Programme have been clear, when it comes to heritage professionals: ‘we’ve given curators options in terms of how they might want to store or display objects – we’ve enabled them to be creative within the boundaries that they work.’ Projects have enabled galleries and museums to make rational decisions when it comes to intervening with heritage objects, with one project looking at colour change in early photographs, for example: ‘to an extent this is a scientific question, but it is also about changes in perception: archive users were asked how much colour change really matters, in different contexts. We’ve enabled curators to focus their resources where it matters most.’

The House of Lords Select Committee, whose report led to the Science and Heritage Programme, touched on the links to industry that the programme might strengthen – and indeed, marketable inventions have also emerged as a direct result of the research. Haida Liang at Nottingham Trent University, for example, helped to develop the next generation of Optical Coherence Tomography instrumentation, allowing non-invasive imaging of the under surface of objects, such as the preparatory drawings that lie under finished paintings. The project helped to give UK companies an edge in developing instruments that use this technology.

At the policy level, too, the Science and Heritage Programme has been a success, says May Cassar: ‘it’s now really embedded in the minds of government departments, the idea that heritage science is a worthwhile activity. The UK is so dependent on tourism, and heritage science is the underpinning science that enables us to use, access and appreciate what we have, for longer. How can we use our heritage without consuming it? Heritage science is now accepted as an important research area in the UK, partly as a result of the Science and Heritage Programme. And other research councils in Europe and the US, such as the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, are following closely what we are doing.’

Finally, one of the impacts of the Science and Heritage Programme has been through its involvement of ‘citizen scientists’ in projects. ‘The public has a fascination with heritage,’ says May Cassar, ‘and the Government is concerned to engage more people in science. Heritage science is now accepted as an important research area in the UK. And other research councils in Europe and the US, such as the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, are following closely what we are doing.’

For May Cassar, in supporting the Science and Heritage Programme ‘the AHRC has looked beyond academic communities, to broaden the scope of the arts and humanities. In a difficult economic climate, it has championed the new area of heritage science, over a long period. In this, it has shown itself to be remarkably bold – even visionary.’

For further information please go to: www.heritagescience.ac.uk
The importance of the manuscript comes from the fact that it is from the very beginnings of Islam in the seventh century.

Writing for posterity

AHRC funding has supported doctoral students learn vital skills for their future careers. Many have also made significant contributions to their disciplines. **Matt Shinn** meets one of them.

Alba Fedeli decided to study Qur’anic fragments in the collection of ancient manuscripts that is held in the Cadbury Research Library at the University of Birmingham following a hint by the German scholar Gerd R. Puin. Among them she focused on two well-preserved leaves of parchment, written in a beautiful early form of Arabic script known as Hijazi. They had been bound into another manuscript and never properly studied. She noticed the similarities between these leaves and those of a fragment in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris which had been dated to the seventh century: if they indeed belonged together, it would make the Birmingham leaves much older than had previously been thought. And with radiocarbon dating now putting the manuscript at between AD 568 and 645, with more than 95 percent certainty, it would seem that Alba Fedeli’s hunch has been proved right.

The Prophet Muhammad lived between AD 570 and 632, with his revelations being transmitted orally during his lifetime. Soon after his death, written leaves began to be collated, to form the Qu’ranic text that we have today. If the results are correct, the Birmingham manuscript may have been among these earliest fragments, which became part of one of the world’s great holy books.

**Witness**

As Alba Fedeli says, the text of the two leaves does not really have theological implications: what the text says (it comes from Suras 18 to 20 of the Qur’an, and concerns the story of Moses’s staff turning into a serpent) is almost identical to what it says in the standard text that is used today. Rather, the importance of the manuscript comes from the fact that it is from the very beginnings of Islam, in the seventh century. ‘It is a witness of that period. And together with the other early fragments, it gives us a clear idea of the written transmission of the text.’

Muslims believe that the Qur’an that they read today is the same text that was standardised under Caliph Uthman, in about AD 650, and that this in turn is an exact record of the divine revelation that was delivered to Muhammad. The Birmingham manuscript would seem to bear out the idea that there has indeed been very little change in the Qur’anic text since it was first written down. But while the particular phrases in the Birmingham leaves are very close to those in the accepted version.

**Horse trading**

How did such an important document come to be in the West Midlands? Part of Alba Fedeli’s PhD on Early Qur’anic manuscripts in Birmingham was concerned with the colourful history behind this document, and how it ended up in Birmingham. It is part of the University’s Mingana Collection of Middle Eastern manuscripts, which was put together in the 1920s by the scholar and former Chaldean priest Alphonse Mingana, on behalf of the Quaker philanthropist Edward Cadbury (owner of the famous chocolate factory at Bournville). Cadbury had wanted to raise the status of Birmingham as an intellectual centre for religious studies, and to increase the breadth of the city’s cultural heritage. And to achieve this end, he sponsored Mingana to undertake expeditions to the
“This is such an important story from the Islamic point of view”

Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and the Sinai Peninsula, to collect ancient manuscripts in Arabic, Syriac, Coptic, Greek and other languages. Success depended upon Mingana’s ability to recognise a significant manuscript.

As Alba Fedeli says, the Mingana Collection still has associated with it ‘the atmosphere of horse-trading in ancient manuscripts that went on in the Twenties and Thirties, a time when manuscript hunters could still get their hands on rarities.’ The early Qur’anic parchment came to the library with a bundle of other ancient Middle Eastern manuscripts, probably from an antiquarian dealer in Leiden. The leaves in Paris are known to have come originally from the oldest mosque in Egypt, which was founded in AD 642.

On show

The newly conserved leaves went on free public display in October 2015, at the University of Birmingham’s Bramall Music Building. For Susan Worrall, who is Director of Special Collections at the Cadbury Research Library, it’s appropriate to have such an important religious document in Birmingham, as it is ‘the most culturally diverse city in the UK.’

For David Parker, who is Edward Cadbury Professor of Theology and Director of the Institute for Textual Scholarship and Electronic Editing at the University of Birmingham, it is also significant that the discovery took place in this particular city, given its large Muslim population: ‘the Muslim community in Birmingham has been very excited,’ he says. ‘This is such an important story from the Islamic point of view. All texts deserve high quality research, but important religious texts especially: knowledge of their history is important to understanding what they are.’

And as David Parker points out, the AHRC’s support for research on early manuscripts is nothing new. He himself worked on an AHRC-funded project relating to the Codex Sinaiticus, which is a biblical manuscript that was written in the middle of the fourth century, and contains the earliest complete copy of the New Testament. The significance of the Codex Sinaiticus, for the reconstruction of the Bible’s original text, and for understanding the history of Western book-making, is immense. The project has involved everything from research into the Codex’s history, to transcription and digitisation of the text, and conservation of the book as an object.

David Parker is also leading the AHRC-funded International Greek New Testament Project, which is making an edition of the Gospel of John, based on the most comprehensive survey ever undertaken of the various forms of the text, and the evidence relating to them. He says: ‘in funding long-term, large-scale research projects around early manuscripts, the AHRC have really changed the nature of our work.’
Uncovering the nation’s treasures

A major exhibition four years ago has continued to impact on scholarship as well as the public’s enjoyment of some of our greatest treasures. Marc Zakian reports

The British Library’s illuminated manuscripts form an extraordinary art collection: images and text of the utmost delicacy and expressiveness created over a millennium and more. During the winter of 2011-12 the Library exhibited around one hundred and fifty works in Royal Manuscripts: The Genius of Illumination. Opened by HM The Queen (see page opposite), the exhibition attracted more than 70,000 visitors and considerable press attention.

The manuscripts in the exhibition – accompanied by a BBC TV series, the Private Lives of Medieval Kings – documented the challenges and tragedies of British kingship, and introduced the public to a little-known art form.

Selected from the Library’s Royal collection of manuscripts, which was donated to the nation in 1757 by George II, the manuscripts were supplemented by others once associated with English monarchs.

“These are objects that offer insights into the personal lives of kings and queens,” explains Dr Scot McKendrick, the exhibition’s lead curator and now head of Western Heritage at the British Library. “Take the Secretum Secretorum. In the middle ages it was believed this was Aristotle’s guide to leadership created for Alexander the Great. A manuscript version was presented to King Edward III at the beginning of his reign. His father had been deposed and brutally murdered, and young Edward was preparing to guide his people through difficult times – this is his ‘instruction book’.”

“During the exhibition visitors saw images of kings whose names are familiar, but faces unknown,” continues McKendrick. So here is Edgar, the first king of England, brought to life on a parchment painted in 966, a hundred years before the Norman Conquest. Here is a delicate line drawing made in 1031 of King Cnut, the monarch famous for defying the tides.

Leveraging further funding

Investment in research can have a ‘multiplier effect’, attracting funding from other sources, as the Royal Illuminated Manuscripts project illustrates. Following the original AHRC grant, the American Trust for the British Library and the Krieble Delmas Foundation funded three six-month internships for American doctoral students to assist on the project. A gift from a private donor allowed the Library to commission new, special display cases with a built-in slope to showcase the manuscripts to best advantage and to increase access for wheelchair users.

Similarly, a grant from the Helen Hamlyn Trust funded the conservation on a tapestry in The Burrell Collection so that it could be included in the exhibition. An unexpected output of the project was the re-use of some of the banners and objects in an upcoming exhibition by the Turner Award-winning artist Mark Leckey.

For Scot McKendrick this can have a galvanizing effect on research and on the interpretative work undertaken by our cultural institutions: ‘The AHRC’s award to the British Library was the seed from which a research project on its Royal manuscripts burgeoned into a major exhibition, attracting significant additional funding to support our key aims of developing the next generation of researchers and engaging a wide public with the outcomes of new research.’
The free availability of these ‘virtual’ manuscripts can transform scholarship and create new research communities.”
The exhibition was the culmination of a three-year project funded by the AHRC in which McKendrick led a research team in collaboration with Professor John Lowden of the Courtauld Institute. Over 600 manuscripts in the Royal collection were surveyed over three years to choose the 150 that would be exhibited. The grant also helped the Library re-catalogue the Royal Manuscripts so that they can be accessed by a wider audience. Another key output was the extensive academic catalogue produced to accompany the exhibition which included full-page colour images of each manuscript in the exhibition.

The AHRC’s grant was fundamental to the exhibition’s success, says McKendrick, enabling the Library to raise additional funds for mounting the exhibition, and new follow-on projects (see page 16).

McKendrick continues: ‘Central to the British Library’s work is our stewardship of these great treasures. This means our work is to preserve but also to interpret and make them accessible to both researchers and the general public. The AHRC grant meant not only that we could prepare and deliver a major exhibition but also that nearly half of the manuscripts featured in the Royal Manuscripts exhibition can continue to be viewed on the Library’s website, without charge, by anyone who wants to look at them.’

Not only does this make rich and otherwise inaccessible treasures freely available to everyone, it also impacts directly on research, says the Lead Curator of Illuminated Manuscripts at the British Library, Dr Kathleen Doyle. ‘The free availability of these ‘virtual’ manuscripts can transform scholarship and create new research communities. One of the inherent restrictions of exhibiting manuscripts is that only one opening of a book can be displayed at any one time. With this new digital access, many thousands of pages which have never been available before can be now viewed at any time, allowing new research to be undertaken anywhere in the world.’

While it will be several years before these great but delicate medieval works can dazzle us again in a major exhibition, we have in the meantime this fund of digital treasures to explore and enjoy.

AHRC and Independent Research Organisations

All UK higher education institutions are eligible to receive research and postgraduate funding from the AHRC. From 2005, other independent research organisations (IROs) also became eligible for funding if they possess ‘an existing in-house capacity to carry out research that materially extends and enhances the national research base and are able to demonstrate an independent capability to undertake and lead research programmes.’

The AHRC now recognises some 18 IROs, including the British Library, British Museum, the Tate, The National Archives and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

For David Anderson, Director General of another IRO, Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales, ‘the recognition by AHRC of museums as research organisations has transformed the role of museums. It has resulted in a significant improvement in the range and quality of the research they undertake, and has enabled museums and universities to undertake innovate projects that otherwise would not have happened.’

For Diane Lees, Director General of the Imperial War Museum, ‘IWM has continued to benefit from our IRO status and the wonderful opportunities this gives us for AHRC funding. We are delighted to be involved in marking the AHRC’s tenth anniversary in various ways – and look forward to a further decade of very positive engagement with AHRC’s very innovative and far-reaching programmes.’

The most recent addition to this list is Historic Royal Palaces (HRP).

Dr Wendy Hitchmough, Head of Research at Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) welcomed the news earlier this year, saying that the hugely successful ceramic poppies installation at the Tower of London, was underpinned by an AHRC networking award.

‘Our project at Tower of London, ‘Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red’ (2014) was underpinned by an AHRC-funded network called ‘Significance of the Centenary’. The project attracted onsite visitors of over five million, and press and media visitors world-wide of many more millions. It became the defining image for our First World War Centenary recognition.’

For further information: www.ahrc.ac.uk/funding/research/iro
Left: The Westminster Psalter, London, c. 1200 (Psalter) and 1250 (tinted drawings)

Right: The Shrewsbury Book. Rouen, 1444–45. Royal 15 E vi, ff 2v-3

The scent of things to come

Nothing better illustrates the extraordinary developments in knowledge exchange in the arts and humanities than Jenny Tillotson’s groundbreaking work over a decade and more.

Tillotson has been receiving backing from the AHRC since 2001, when her idea was in its infancy as a dress, rather than an advanced system for scent delivery. Now that she has developed her inventions into something almost market-ready, she reflects that the money and support she has received has been essential for her work to reach this point. It has taken her from the world of high fashion to the world of high-tech, with her business and commercialising the eScent product.

‘It started as a dress in 2001, which received a small award in creative and performing arts,’ she says. ‘From there I created the scent delivery system with the AHRC Innovation Award from 2004. Then there is the patent too, which allows real tracing of impact way into the future.’

This patent is undoubtedly the most important result of the work and research that Tillotson has put into the project. ‘The patent covers a liquid delivery system, so that could be a scent, an insect repellent, perfume or aromatherapy in response to some sensed biometric property or sound,’ says Tillotson. ‘So, for example, it has to be triggered by some kind of action or sound in the near environment, which could be a mosquito, music or snoring, even. It could be programmed to react to emotional response such as heart rate or body odour as well, which is really useful. It works for stress or anxiety in that case, so is very much for wellbeing.’

Even a surface reading of the eScent patent is enough to excite any entrepreneur in the field of sports, perfume, health or wellbeing. A product that can mask your body odour when out for a run, deliver a shot of insect repellent when it detects something about to bite or can spritz you with Rescue Remedy when you are strung-out is the sort of tech that makes sense. Tillotson says that the AHRC funds allowed her to get ahead of the

Follow on to innovation

Jenny Tillotson has been working with the AHRC in various ways since 2001, when she received a Small Award for the creative and performing arts. This award was related to her Smart Second Skin dress, which has been the basis for all development since.

A 2004 Innovation Award allowed her to work in micro pumps and bio sensors, which led to the eScent patent. Once this was in place Tillotson received further funding, in the shape of a 2010 Knowledge Transfer Fellowship. This allowed her to work with Philips Research on a piece of research entitled Smell The Colours of the Rainbow.

In 2014, Tillotson received an AHRC Follow-on Fund IMPACT & Engagement Award (see page 22) to work on the feasibility of eScent and validate the commercial potential of the Intellectual Property. This was followed by a London Fusion Collaborative Award from AHRC/European Regional Development Fund. This award was for collaborative work with Goldsmiths University to look at the user and market needs for eScent, as well as market size potential.

Put simply, eScent is a wearable that interacts with the user via technology’
A lot of companies are now talking about digital scent, so it is definitely the right time for this.”

How a dress became a high-tech scent delivery system

Jenny Tillotson’s initial project, the Smart Second Skin dress, was more a conceptual fashion piece than an attempt to revolutionise the way that we use scents. But all the clues were there, even if Tillotson had not yet seen them herself in the 2001 design. The dress rapidly moved from drawing to prototype of an interactive piece of hardware that imitated human skin and nervous system alike, with the technology to do that coming after further awards to aid research.

Subsequent research work has focused on biometrics and developing the product as a commercial idea. Rather than being a dress, the new technology will be embedded in either clothing or jewellery, reacting to movement, sound, body odour or mood. Tillotson has worked with big name sportswear manufacturers, cosmetics manufacturers and tech businesses in her quest to make the product perfect.

The scent is released in a small burst near to the user, so that it is not like spraying your perfume bottle on the street. Wearability allows for both personalisation and proximity. Medical applications will range from helping amnesia sufferers to help in monitoring and controlling mood swings in bipolar disorder.

“I failed all my exams at school, but now I am a STEM ambassador.” she says. “I was inspired by reading science fiction books and even Star Trek. I have no science background and have had to learn as I go. It really is everything from JG Ballard to insects that have inspired the journey. It all started with a
PhD in interactive olfactory surfaces 20 years ago. I was looking for something beyond ‘scratch and sniff’ but didn’t quite know where I was going to go.’

One person who did have some clue as to where Tillotson might be heading is knowledge transfer expert Philip Ternouth, who was Innovation Director for National Universities and Business at London Fusion. Ternouth has followed Tillotson from his time on AHRC panels to his role at London Fusion and beyond.

‘This one was distinctive from an AHRC perspective,’ says Ternouth. ‘This is due to the fact that technology is one eventual outcome of research, it demonstrates that AHRC funded research can have high impact applications across many different disciplines, far from where the researcher started out. This can be true of research in general but this is a great example for the AHRC research community.’

‘We have got to the point now where it is a very investible proposition and it is close to market. The market is potentially huge and it is a bit like a binary variable in that once the switch is thrown then people will recognise and relate to it. It can take off very quickly from there. The sake of convenience alone makes the market huge, for men as well as women.’

Hugh Parnell, who is Tillotson’s business development advisor, also believes that the eScent has the potential to rapidly create demand once it is unleashed upon the market. Parnell is Chairman of Cambridge Clean Tech and acts as mentor to various new companies, including Tillotson’s eScent.

‘It could well become viral,’ says Parnell of eScent’s potential. ‘There are some very serious people in the fashion industry who have indicated interest in having a mechanism that demonstrates the ability eScent has. Department stores are interested too. So, she is on the brink and just needs to find the capital. We have talked to a lot of capital sources and venture capital business angels, but we need to find the right person at the right time.’

Parnell is convinced that the savvy investor will see sheer scale of potential markets for the eScent, which he believes brings scent delivery into the 21st century.

‘One clear market is the replacement for the perfume bottle and the ability to deliver an array of personal scents using small cartridges that can be replaced,’ he says. ‘The other is wearable technology, fashion and perfume overlapping. The patent offers an array of uses that stretches from anti-malarial to something you might use in the bedroom to dispense pheromones – what I call “the Ann Summers effect”. We are focussing on the wellbeing market for now, which is very big in itself.’

Parnell cites the mobile phone as a model for the kind of disruption that eScent could bring to the market.

‘When mobile phones started they were supposed to be for making calls, but soon the biggest use was for texting, taking photographs and using the internet,’ he says. ‘In much the same way, we don’t know what smell is for, but Jenny is developing methods and thoughts for many ways that we can use aroma and smell in a very personal way. I think that is radical and potentially world-changing. Getting to the point where the world says “we can’t live without this” is the challenge.’

Jenny Tillotson is more than ready for that challenge. Only time will tell whether eScent will be a global game-changer. But there is little doubt that the AHRC has played a part in taking it to the brink of realising its full potential.

The Follow on Fund in facts and figures

The AHRC’s Follow-on Fund for Impact and Engagement allows its researchers to capitalise on research outcomes and its potential impact which might have been unanticipated at the outset of a project or which may have emerged after the project has been completed. A total of 92 awards have been made through the fund since 2011.

A number of these awards have involved collaborative initiatives with creative and cultural organisations and since the scheme’s launch has already resulted in the creation of spinout companies, e.g. the successful and award-winning company, The Chinese Room specialising in video game development. Its first game Dear Esther was underpinned by AHRC funded research and was nominated for 5 BAFTAs. The Chinese room has since developed further successful video games (Amnesia – A Machine for Pigs and Everybody’s Gone to Rapture) with funding from Frictional Games AB and Sony Entertainment (see page 106).
SAIL AWAY

A project set up nearly a decade ago has been as interesting for its unpredicted impacts as for those it set out to make, reports Matt Shinn.

In the early twentieth century, tens of thousands of people left Scotland for a new life overseas. But who were they, why did they go, and what are the lasting effects of this Scottish diaspora?

A free online resource, which was the product of an AHRC-funded research project, helps to provide some answers. The Scottish Emigration Database uses information from the passenger manifests that are held in the National Archives at Kew, to identify patterns of movement from Scottish ports between 1890 and 1960. And snapshots from this vast archival record for 1923 can now also be searched online, to pull out the stories of more than twenty thousand individuals who sailed from Scottish ports. Information, including what a particular passenger’s occupation had been, what their address was, and even whether they were a member of organised emigrant groups such as the Salvation Army, are included in the database.

As Nick Evans, who is Lecturer in Diaspora History at the University of Hull and who worked on the project, explains: ‘published statistical summaries of patterns of British migration had been available before the database, showing the broad trends in emigration from Scotland in this period, but other than that there had been a huge gap in our knowledge about social and economic information on who left Britain. Our project explored some of the finer detail of Scottish emigration, such as its effects on particular regions, occupational patterns among the people who left, and pivotal moments in the exodus from Scotland.’

‘For me as a migration historian, I was familiar with broad generalisations about emigration at certain times in our recent past, but there were some big surprises in what we found, when we began to look at the variations within this overall pattern. 1923, for example, turned out to be a peak year for Scottish emigration – probably in response to the First World War, when many Scots returning home from the front line found that there was little to return to, and then deciding to head overseas. What the database shows is that the profile of Scottish migration is much more complex than we’d thought.’

Some sailings had particular relevance for remote and rural parts of Scotland. Marjory Harper, who is Professor of History at the University of Aberdeen and who directed the project, points to two particular sailings in April 1923. After embarking their initial complement of passengers at Greenock, each of these vessels called at a different port in the Outer Hebrides, where they took on board 600 islanders for the transatlantic crossing. ‘The sailings from Stornoway and South Uist were very public events, and had a huge impact on the islands. The departure of the Metagama from Stornoway has become part of the folk history of Lewis.’

Then there were the large numbers of highly skilled urban migrants, who left following the collapse of large parts of Scotland’s industrial base in the wake of World War One. In Nick Evans’s words, this was ‘not a case of shovelling out the paupers and undesirables’ – these were people with a lot to offer.

And in particular, the analysis revealed a sizeable movement to the expanding motor industries of the US which was something of a surprise: ‘the US generally dominates stories of European migration, but it hadn’t been thought particularly to be a place that Scots went to. They were recalled as more likely to move to Canada and New Zealand.’

Our research showed the contribution of skilled Scots to the growth of the US in the long twentieth century: they weren’t just bolstering the Empire.’

Lessons of the diaspora

The Scottish Emigration Database was one of seven research projects, based at the University of Aberdeen’s AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies (one of a number of research centres funded by the AHRC and, in its early days, the AHRB), and funded through the Centre’s Diaspora Programme.

At a time of important constitutional change, the Centre, which ran until 2010, aimed to shed light on the historical and cultural influences which have shaped relationships between Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. And given the unusually high emigration rates of the Irish and Scottish peoples since medieval times, the Centre focused particularly on the various waves of departure from Scotland and Ireland, and the impact they have had on the countries where the emigrants settled.

And what of the lessons we can learn, from this period of Scottish emigration? For Nick Evans, it demonstrates the inadequacy of British official policy in relation to unemployment and industrial restructuring, especially in the Twenties and Thirties – something which still has implications today. ‘It showed the failure of Westminster to comprehend the plight of those in the more remote parts of the British Isles, and this continues to have repercussions. There is a need for economic models for different parts of the UK, and not just for each nation within it: the story of Scottish emigration in the twentieth century showed the dire consequences of Westminster failing to see that.’

For Marjory Harper, it is a reminder of the complexity and controversy that have always surrounded the whole story of
emigration, not just from Scotland. "While the surge in departures was particularly contentious in the febrile economic and political climate of inter-war Scotland, the Scottish experience was not unique. This was an era when the pros and cons of migration and settlement were hotly debated throughout the British Isles and the Dominions, and one of the key strengths of the database is that it allows a comparative lens to be applied to a vital and vibrant international phenomenon."

Slow burn
The impacts of the Scottish Emigration Database have been many and wide-ranging, in the near-decade since it was set up, but many of its effects had been unpredicted. ‘The project has matured like the AHRC,’ says Nick Evans, ‘with impacts being generated in the longer term: it’s been a slow burn.’ First, the database has been a gift to academics and genealogists. ‘When we first conceived of the database, we assumed that the greatest interest in it would be in the US or Canada, but we’ve also had a huge amount of attention from Australia and New Zealand. Online engagement has been unbelievable, with a resurgence in genealogy: our website has had over two and a half million hits.’

Other uses have been more unusual – according to Nick Evans, the database may be about to contribute to a project that involves analysing DNA in parts of Scotland that emigrants came from, to look at the implications for public health in the places where they settled.

Then there have been uses of the database for economic regeneration, which again would have been difficult to predict. ‘We’ve heard of a researcher who was making the business case for increased direct flights between Glasgow and Canada, for example, using data on the number of Scottish emigrants to Canada who lived within 75 miles of Glasgow Airport. One or two generations later the data helped the airline sustain a business model based on roots tourism. We hadn’t thought of that as a use of the database, but there’s sensible business logic there.’

More broadly too, the Scottish Emigration Database has helped to bolster cultural tourism, which is so important to the devolved Scottish economy. The Scottish Executive has funded Homecoming events in 2009 and 2014, for example, which encourage people with Scottish heritage to come and visit the places where they came from: the database makes it easier to trace exactly where your Scottish ancestor may have lived, and so it provides an economic boost to the remoter parts of Scotland, as well as the big port cities.

For Marjory Harper, ultimately ‘it was very far-sighted of the AHRC to fund something like the Scottish Emigration Database, which might have looked like a dry exercise in number-crunching. So much can be done with a resource like this.’

For further information:
www.abdn.ac.uk/emigration
ATLAS OF THE WORLD

COMPLIMENTS OF
THE CUNARD STEAM SHIP COMPANY LIMITED
ANCHOR LINE
ANCHOR-DONALDSON LINE
since 2006 the ‘Historical Photographs of China’ project has been seeking out families who have historic links with China, borrowing their sometimes extensive family photograph collections, digitizing them, and placing them on an open access website (hpc.vcea.net). With funding from the AHRC (through the British Inter-university China Centre), the British Academy, Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation and private sponsors, we have so far placed online over 9,000 images, dating from as early as the 1860s. They come from bankers, missionaries, customs staff, policemen and diplomats, amongst many others. The album showcased here was compiled by a talented photographer, the Reverend Charles Ewart Darwent, a Yorkshireman who lived in the city from 1899 to 1919, serving as pastor to its Union Church.

Darwent is best known for composing the first detailed guidebook in English to Shanghai, initially published in 1904 and illustrated with poor reproductions of his own photographs. The handbook is unabashedly partisan: ‘I believe,’ he wrote, that Shanghai hosted ‘much more beautiful and imposing buildings than any in Japan’. His book directed his readers to the best spots for taking photographs of these sites, with advice about which was the best time of day, or occasion for visiting. The album of photographs is dated 1902, and provided us with excellent prints of many of the images from his guide, as well as his own captions. It showcases Darwent’s early explorations of the city he thought such a ‘happy hunting ground’ for a visitor with a camera, and captures the streets of Shanghai, its waterways and its people at work and play.

Look carefully and you will see a city of contrasts, shaped alike by foreign power and an indigenous modernity. China is nine years away from the revolution that overthrew the last emperor and which inaugurated a republic. Shanghai had mushroomed in the previous five decades to become China’s preeminent port, and the centre of its social and political change. This is a city in transition, caught in the lens of a wide-eyed new arrival from across the seas.

Robert Bickers, University of Bristol

The photographs are © 2009 Jane Hayward, and were probably taken in 1902.
1 'Chinese Bund', Da01-31
‘An infinity of ... photographs may be taken’: the riverside embankment by the old walled city, alive with pedestrians against a backdrop of junk masts. Hidden behind Darwent are the steamers and foreign warships in the Huangpu River.

2 'Foochow junk with poles', Da01-21
Decorated trading junks like this one from Fuzhou fascinated foreign observers. Ocean-going junks from Shanghai reached Singapore in the 1820s, and first alerted the British to the potential of the city as a port.

3 'Soochow Creek, near boat house', Da01-01
A city on the water: a sampan is poled down the river that linked it to the network of canals and creeks that reached deep into the countryside to the west, towards the Huangpu, which flowed into the Yangzi, bringing the heart of China into Shanghai’s reach.

4 'Chinese tumblers, Race Day, November 1902', Da01-26
All the fun of a traditional Chinese fair was to be found close by the racecourse.

5 'A bit of hard work. Four coolies dragging one ton of soap up Chapoo Road Bridge', Da01-36
The city’s growth rested on such disparagingly described hard labour. When the foreign authorities briefly proscribed ‘heave-ho’ chanting by such gangs, productivity fell off, and the ban was repealed.

6 'The inner bailey, New North Gate, Native City', Da01-05
The bustle at one of the gates to the original walled city, through which walks a woman carrying an umbrella, one foreign good amongst many which had rapidly been incorporated into everyday Chinese life.

7 'Shantung road', Da01-25
The rickshaw was a relatively new machine still in 1902; Shanghai mostly relied on the wheelbarrow.

8 'Nanking Road', Da01-06
Along what is fast becoming China’s premier shopping street, a rickshaw carries a foreign woman west towards the elite foreign residences on the Bubbling Well Road.

9 'Chinese Fair, Race Day, November 1902', Da01-11
Shanghai shut down for the spring and autumn horse races, and residents flocked towards the city centre racecourse to ride, to watch, to place a bet, or eat at stalls like this.

10 "Where did you get that hat?", Da01-32
A new subject for a popular song.

11 'On Foochow Road, China New Year Day, 1902', Da01-15
Wearing new clothes for a new year, women on the street at the heart of Shanghai’s cultural life, the site of bookshops, and theatres, teahouses and brothels. The bookshops, at least, remain today.

12 'Kong store, sweet chestnut stall, Soochow Creek side, Shanghai', Da01-14
Darwent was struck by the way shops spilt out on to the streets, and at the range of goods and services offered there by hawkers and traders to a city in motion.
A pan-European project is demonstrating the value of research collaborations across borders as well as the importance of materials, writes Matt Shinn

The key has been the opportunity for makers to learn from the deep past

They certainly did things differently and showed exceptional levels of skill

The materials that we work with shape us, perhaps as much as we shape them. We even name historical periods after some of them – the Palaeolithic, the Neolithic, the Bronze Age, the Iron Age.

But what can we, in our era of plastics and silicon, learn from the way that people manipulated materials in the distant past? A pan-European research project – Creativity and Craft Production in Middle and Late Bronze Age Europe, or CinBA – has provided some answers.

CinBA’s main focus was on creativity, during a period (around 1800BC to 500BC) when some new technologies had been established that we take for granted today: in the creation of, bronze tools, weapons and ornaments, textiles, and novel ceramic forms.

In other words, the project was about what people did with these new technologies, once they had been invented.

As project leader Jo Sofaer, who is Professor of Archaeology at the University of Southampton, explains: ‘we were interested in how they then made elaborate and complicated objects from it. Or once they’d learned how to make textiles, how they began to get colour, pattern or texture into them. Stripes, checks, tartans – we think of them as if they were there forever, but they have their origin in the Bronze Age.’

Big sweeps

CinBA brought academics in several different countries together with specialists from different kinds of institutions (including Universities of Southampton and Cambridge, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, the National Museum of Denmark, the Natural History Museum of Vienna, Sagnlandet Lejre Living History Park in Denmark and the UK Crafts Council), who could offer materials-based and local expertise.

By working on this big scale, it’s been possible to track some big sweeps in the take-up of decorative motifs, and the techniques and skills used in making objects, across the continent of Europe, over more than a millennium. The project has worked outward, say, we were interested in how they then made elaborate and complicated objects from it. Or once they’d learned how to make textiles, how they began to get colour, pattern or texture into them. Stripes, checks, tartans – we think of them as if they were there forever, but they have their origin in the Bronze Age.’

Research across borders: Humanities in the European Research Area

CinBA was one of nine international projects, related to creativity, which have been supported by HERA – Humanities in the European Research Area. HERA is a partnership between 24 Humanities Research Councils across Europe, who are working strategically to align their research priorities, and to establish the Humanities in the European research landscape. And as Lucy Parnall, who is European Strategy and Development Manager at the AHRC, explains, the AHRC has played a fundamental part in HERA from the start: ‘HERA is the first big European funding opportunity for Humanities researchers. It makes possible different kinds of project, on a bigger scale, and it enables researchers to collaborate with whoever they want to in Europe, picking the best people.’

The AHRC leads on Knowledge Exchange within HERA, demonstrating that international Humanities research is not just excellent, but has impact of many different kinds. ‘We’re challenging the idea of individual scholars working alone in their ivory towers,’ says Lucy Parnall: ‘given the chance, they want to work in an interdisciplinary and international way.’
from particular examples of Bronze Age objects in important collections, to a Europe-wide picture of the spread of creative ideas.

Old meets new
Knowledge Exchange has been embedded in CinBA from the start. The project has involved non-academic partners, the Crafts Council in the UK and Sagnlandet Lejre (an open-air archaeological museum) in Denmark, to explore links between ancient and modern creativity. In particular, CinBA has investigated the potential impact that Bronze Age objects may have, as a source of inspiration to contemporary makers: this was the first academic project of its kind to explore the creative potential of interdisciplinary collaboration between archaeology and contemporary crafts.

As Julia Bennett, the Craft Council’s Research and Policy Manager, explains: ‘at the Crafts Council we regularly get involved in research projects, but the Bronze Age is the earliest that we’ve gone: we’re usually looking at contemporary trends. We’re always keen to introduce makers to new ways in which they can develop their practice. And for us, the key to the CinBA project has been the opportunity for makers to learn from the deep past, to take examples of prehistoric creativity and use them as inspiration.’

Among a number of exhibitions arising from the project was one at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge, in which new pieces were juxtaposed with ancient ones, to showcase the differences and similarities in creativity over thousands of years. Weaver Mary Butcher, for example, drew on her knowledge of the fish traps that were once common in the Fens, to create basketry sculptures. As well as established makers, those in the early stages of their careers have been inspired through CinBA: ceramicist Holly Inglis, for example, uses ancient methods of rock carving and other decorative techniques ‘which are common in the Bronze Age, but not in university teaching.’

According to Jo Sofaer, ‘we can’t really say that people made things better in the Bronze Age, but they certainly did things differently and showed exceptional levels of skill. As well as giving contemporary makers ideas, we’ve provided them with a lineage for their own disciplines.’

Making and materials
CinBA enables us to understand the past in new ways, then, through the lens of creativity. But it also offers important insights into the fundamental nature of creativity, which are relevant today.

For Jo Sofaer, CinBA has helped to show in particular how creativity is guided by the differing potential of different materials. And it’s shown how close the links are between creativity in making objects and other aspects of human life, including cosmology and other belief systems.

Ultimately what CinBA shows, though, is that ‘it is very hard to generalise about creativity: the way that it emerges is very context-specific. We can’t just talk of a single thing called creativity: we have to understand the complexity and variety of the ways in which human beings create their material world, and how they play out their understanding of the world through objects.’
Faith in the future the Religion and Society programme

A collaborative programme which drew on the social sciences as well as the arts and humanities to address major questions about faith in a secular age continues to have impact, writes Matt Shinn

‘Predictions of a secular future have not come true,’ says Professor Linda Woodhead of the Department of Politics, Philosophy and Religion at Lancaster University. ‘We need to understand why that is, and what it means.’

But while religion remains important within our society, as well as globally, it is also changing significantly. To shed light on the nature and consequences of this change, the Religion and Society programme was commissioned on the basis of a consultation involving the academic community, which highlighted the importance and timeliness of research in this area. Not just because of the importance of religion in contemporary society, but also because of a sense that religion had previously been marginalised within the academy, and hadn’t received the research attention that it deserved.

The Religion and Society programme is the largest strategic research initiative that the AHRC has so far supported. With a budget of £12 million and lasting six years, it involved the AHRC working together with the Economic Social Research Council (ESRC). And with clusters of work around religion and education, violence and security, religion and the media and religion and the arts, it aimed to show how religion interrelates with many other aspects of life such as law, literature, ethnicity, social media and architecture – and even clothes design.

Faith and fashion

Reina Lewis is Professor of Cultural Studies at the London College of Fashion. Working with anthropologist Dr Emma Tarlo of Goldsmith’s, University of London, her project Modest Dressing: Faith-based Fashion and Internet Retail has helped to open up a previously neglected field, namely the influence of religion on contemporary clothing styles.

‘It’s clear that the market is developing,’ says Reina Lewis. ‘The last two decades have seen the development of a rapidly expanding and diversifying market for modest fashion, arising initially from the needs of Christian, Jewish and Muslim women, who are motivated to dress modestly for religious reasons. But they also want to be on trend: there’s a discernible taste community here, and the Internet has been instrumental in enabling this niche market to flourish.’

One of the project’s findings was that clothing designs developed by one faith group were often able to cross over, and be adopted by others.

As well as stimulating debate between and within faiths, including through a series of public talks at the London College of Fashion, the project has helped designers and entrepreneurs in the fashion industry to cater for this growing market for modest dress. ‘We’ve created a community around the world, of researchers, designers and other people who are interested in this subject,’ says Reina Lewis. ‘And being sponsored by a Research Council was a huge help when I was approaching brands and community organisations. It showed that the subject was finally being taken seriously.’

Dark past

Drawing important lessons from the past, meanwhile, was the Youth, Violence and Cult project, led by Professor Miri Rubin of Queen Mary, University of London. The project focused on the twelfth-century murder of a boy known as William of Norwich, which a local monk described in a book, The Life and Passion of William of Norwich (now, as a result of the project, translated from Latin and published in Penguin Classics).

William’s murder, it said, was perpetrated by Jews, in a bizarre ritual. William went on to be venerated locally, with his cult drawing visitors from far afield: as Miri Rubin says, ‘there’s a fateful ambivalence in all this – the fact that William of Norwich’s cult could have been a source of consolation and hope to so many, and yet at its heart was an anti-Semitic calumny.’
For Miri Rubin, having the chance to put together a research network for the project meant that she could assemble ‘my wish list of great people to work with, from around the world.’ Contributions were made by scholars in history, literature, art history and liturgy, who combined to illuminate the episode and its consequences. And for Miri Rubin, what the story of William of Norwich shows above all is how easily religious minorities, then as now, can become the target of unfounded accusations: ‘it’s the easiest thing to vilify and victimise a community, even when they seem embedded in the place where they are. What happened shows the importance of remaining vigilant.’

Too much with too little?
A project entitled Does Religious Education Work? looked at the aims, practices and effects of religious education in schools, in the very different contexts of England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland. It involved a detailed analysis of pupils’ experience of religious education in secondary schools. For project leader James Conroy, who is Professor of Religious and Philosophical Education at the University of Glasgow, the social and educational demands that are placed on it leads to a conflict between religious education as an academic subject and as a subject aimed at students’ social and personal development.

His study also raised questions about how religious education should be supported – ‘even in schools where it is valued,’ he says, ‘too often it is under-resourced, and required to do too much with too little. As a result, it often loses focus.’

Religious in different ways
Young people’s attitudes to religion were explored in Negotiating Identity: Looking at Young People’s Perspectives on Religion and Community. The project involved the biggest survey of young people ever carried out looking at where they position themselves in terms of their religious identity, as well as their broader perspectives on religion and
Too often religious education is under-resourced, and required to do too much with too little’

its positive and negative aspects. For Linda Woodhead, who led the Religion and Society programme, some clear trends can be seen in the survey’s results, with the growth of unaffiliated religious groups and a decline in traditional religious authority, and a more individualised religious experience, with a greater mixing of beliefs. And yet religion as a whole seems to be having a revival of interest among young people: “the evidence suggests that young people aren’t necessarily becoming more secular, they’re just engaged with religion in different ways – and may reject the organised religion label altogether.’

Lasting legacy – the Westminster Faith debates
If there were any doubt about the timeliness of the Religion and Society programme,
or its ability to engage people outside of academia, the Westminster Faith Debates dispelled them.

In 2012 Linda Woodhead joined with former Home Secretary Charles Clarke, to launch a series of discussions that would bring research on religion to new audiences. The ongoing Westminster Faith Debates, which have received follow-on funding from the AHRC, have tested the research findings of the Religion and Society programme against the practical experience of public figures who are engaged with matters of religion and belief.

By the end of 2015 there will have been a total of five series of the Debates. Attracting considerable media attention and often standing-room-only, they have covered such topical issues as religion in public life, faith schools, radicalisation and religious freedom.

And following on from the debates, Linda Woodhead and Charles Clarke have been preparing policy pamphlets, to make specific and workable recommendations in areas of current concern and importance. The first of these pamphlets deals with religion in schools, including the place of religious education in the curriculum, the practices of faith schools, and the ‘predominantly Christian act of collective worship’ that schools are currently obliged to include in their timetables. The pamphlet calls for a new settlement to update the 1944 Education Act, in the light of contemporary beliefs and practices, as they are revealed by the latest research. In particular, the pamphlet says, religious education needs to be wider-ranging, and assemblies need to be reworked to make them multi-faith, while also catering to the non-religious. According to Linda Woodhead, there is a ‘direct line of descent from these recommendations to the Religion and Society programme.

Big collaborations
Finally, for Linda Woodhead the achievement of the Religion and Society programme as a whole is that as well as improving debate and discussion about religion, it has revitalised the study of religion in the UK: “the projects we worked on have helped to put religion back into disciplines that had largely neglected it.”

The programme has led to a huge body of new research on questions that are of central importance: ‘it has changed the nature of the debate about the role of faith in our society, brought research to the heart of that debate, and given it public presence.’ And at the same time, it has helped to train a new generation of researchers, and fostered new collaborations between disciplines in the arts, humanities and social sciences.

What Religion and Society shows above all is how adventurous the AHRC has been in its first ten years: ‘This was a programme in an area of huge contemporary relevance, and it’s had undeniable socio-economic impact,’ says Linda Woodhead. ‘The scale of the programme was extremely impressive – it was a big, ambitious undertaking, showing that benefits come from collaborations, and from daring to enter into areas which have been side-lined because of academic and social fashion.’

For further information, please go to: www.religionandsociety.org.uk
A major research project at the University of the West of England, now in its sixth year, is on course to create the largest, most detailed and most accurate database of the UK’s family surnames.

It is estimated that there are around 378,000 surnames in the UK with more than one bearer. A research project funded by the AHRC and led by Professors Patrick Hanks and Richard Coates of the University of the West of England has, since 2010, been uncovering the origins, history and distribution of many of these and in doing so, is producing an extraordinary view on British history over the last thousand years.

Using published and unpublished resources dating from the 11th century onwards, including parish records, censuses and a huge database of 14th-century tax returns, the team, who have a wide range of expertise in historical linguistics and onomastics, are collecting information about individual names such as when and where they were recorded, and how they have been spelled.

The main product of the first four years of research is a database, now submitted to Oxford University Press for online and print publication around the end of 2016 as the Dictionary of Family Names in Britain and Ireland (FaNBI). The Dictionary will contain all the surnames with over 100 bearers in historical reference year 1881 and/or census year 2001. Users will be able to find a wide range of information about each surname, including its linguistic, social and geographical origins, and its modern distribution. It will be accessible via educational institutions and public libraries, as well as by private subscription.

“The focus is to explain the linguistic history of each name,” explains Coates, “but we wanted it to be a resource that was available to family historians, so it became necessary to tie up the linguistic evidence with geographical evidence for where the name is at the moment, and to some degree where the names have been focused in the past.”

Hanks adds: “We very much hope that our database will be used in schools as well as by genealogists and the general public. I have found that by studying the origins of their own name and those of their classmates, children can be inspired to want to find out more about language and history in general.”

Plus, by listing the recorded spellings of the name with a date, users will be able to see how names have changed over the years.

Even before the start of this project Hanks was well aware of the gap this research would fill. “I had already published on surnames, a comparative study of European surnames and American surnames, so I was aware of the sad state of surname studies in Britain, and I thought with modern computational techniques, we could improve,” he explains.

“One of the many reasons why previous scholars had shied away from surname studies was because the data was not easily available or manipulable. Contrast for example place name studies: place names stay where they are. Most of the time you’ve got a fairly good idea where the place is that you’re talking about. People, on the other hand, move around; they die; and they change their names. You need a huge amount of data and a good statistical model plus a computer to manipulate it, if you are going to do surname studies properly.”

“We think it’s a wonderful way for children to learn their history and language”
Our aim is to explain all the names with more than 100 present-day bearers, regardless of their geographical origin

In January 2014, AHRC awarded UWE a further grant to continue the research for another 33 months. This means that all surnames with 20 bearers or more in the UK in the 1881 Census are in the process of being researched, which will bring the total number of surnames in the database to over 60,000. Plus, the etymologies of place names and relationship names will be investigated and integrated. The earliest surnames of the landholding classes tended – more than those of other classes – to be names of places, whilst those of small tenants and serfs included a high proportion of names ending in ‘s’ and ‘son’ like Roberts and Jackson.

Says Richard Coates: “We pay particular attention, wherever possible, to linking family names to locations. And on the second FaNUK project we have the resources to explain the origins of those place names as well.”

This second phase of the project, now well underway, allows for research into rarer surnames. There are large numbers of more uncommon names in the UK: both ‘established’ names which have been here for hundreds of years, and many ‘recent immigrant’ names [from India and China, for example], which have mostly arrived since World War II.

“Where reliable information is available about a rare but long-established name, we include it and explain it,” says Hanks. “As for recent immigrant names, these are now a feature of multi-ethnic Britain and cannot be ignored. So our aim now is to explain all the names with more than 20 present-day bearers, regardless of their geographical origin. This means that we are continuing to work in collaboration with colleagues from other institutions who are expert in a wide range of languages.”

The project is supported by consultants who are the top authorities on names in those languages which have given us our surnames, such as: Old Scandinavian, Anglo-Norman French, Welsh, Cornish, Gaelic, Yiddish, and more recently other languages such as Polish, Chinese, Arabic, Yoruba, Hindi, and Urdu.

The research team has also been consulting the expertise of the Guild of One-Name Studies, whose members focus their work on all the bearers of a single surname, rather than more traditional genealogical studies, which research a particular person’s ancestry. What makes this project different to any of its predecessors in the area is the scope that computerisation offers. Previous surname researchers did not have this kind of luxury, relying instead on handwritten index cards to keep their records, risking transcription errors resulting in multiple errors and fundamentally unreliable data. And as a result, they did not have an accurate picture of the relationship between surnames and localities (regions, counties, and parishes), and they were unable to track changes over time. We have now entered a new era of surname studies where it will be possible to do these things and more.

“In the past, ambitious scholars wouldn’t touch the study of surnames because, although plenty of data was theoretically available, it was overwhelming, unsorted, and unusable – simply impossible to sort by hand except in comparatively small selections. What there was remained patchy and unreliable. No-one had really studied the subject in breadth and depth.”

The database will also lay the foundation for future researchers’ projects. “The way that we view our work is that we’re setting up a framework for future scholars’ more detailed studies, and to do more detailed studies that take account of geographical distribution, relation of surnames to place names, linguistic changes over time, social changes, and other factors like that, as well as just simple weight of numbers,” says Hanks.

Kirsty Gray, past chairman of the Guild of One-Name Studies, is looking forward to seeing the final results and possible further projects, and is proud of her organisation’s involvement. She enthuses: “The knowledge and expertise of Guild members coupled with the extensive linguistic awareness of the researchers and investigators at the University of the West of England will undoubtedly produce a first class database of surnames: a publication of enormous value to genealogists, family historians and lexicographers the world over.”

For further information, please go to: www1.uwe.ac.uk/cahe/research/bristolcentreforlinguistics/fanuk.aspx
Who decides about human rights?

Engaging with policymakers has been an important feature of many AHRC-funded projects over the last decade. **Matt Shinn** explores one project which continues to impact on policy both here and abroad.

Who should decide on questions of human rights – the Government, Parliament or the courts? The furore around the question of whether prisoners should be allowed to vote, and various attempts to deport allegedly dangerous foreign nationals, have led many to think that there’s a democratic deficit when it comes to human rights in the UK, with unaccountable judges being able to frustrate the will of elected politicians.

Contributing some much-needed evidence to this debate is Murray Hunt, who since 2004 has been the Legal Adviser to the UK Parliament’s Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR). A barrister himself, Murray Hunt has been leading the AHRC-funded research project Parliaments and Human Rights, which has included the first systematic analysis of the work of the JCHR, the parliamentary body that scrutinises all Government Bills for their human rights implications and compatibility.

‘The project started small,’ says Murray Hunt: ‘it was just looking at the quality of debate on human rights in Parliament. Over a period, the Committee was reporting to Parliament on human rights, but no one was examining its impact on the quality of debate. The project also looked at what use courts had made of parliamentary materials generated by human rights-related debates in Parliament when they considered those same human rights issues.’

The findings of the project were set out in *Parliaments and Human Rights: Redressing the Democratic Deficit*, which was co-written with Hayley Hooper and Paul Yowell, and published as part of the AHRC’s Public Policy Series. It showed that, over the decade to 2010, and going by references to the JCHR in
Hansard as well as in court judgments, there had indeed been a clear increase both in the degree of the UK Parliament’s involvement in debates about human rights, and in the quality of that debate.

Prevention better than cure
Still, the report said, the institutions of state haven’t caught up with the consensus that seems to be emerging among legal experts, around the need for Parliament, the executive and the judiciary to have shared responsibility for protecting and realising human rights. For this sharing of responsibility to happen, the report argued, Parliament in particular needs to take on a much more active role than is the case at present.

As Murray Hunt says, ‘in this country we spend a lot of time litigating, mopping up the mess in terms of human rights, with judges providing legal remedies when individuals have their rights violated. But prevention is better than cure: Parliaments need to consider human rights at a much earlier stage in the process. There’s also a legitimacy dimension to all this – because the protection of human rights has depended so much in the past on judges, politicians feel that they have had decisions foisted upon them by decision-makers who are less democratically legitimate. We need to get the executive to think more about what human rights mean in practice in a policy context, and not just leave it to the courts. When it comes to protecting human rights, my personal conviction is that we need to forge a middle path between thinking that the courts do it best, or that the courts should leave well alone.’

The global relevance of the research
The next stage in the project involved a two-day conference, organised by the AHRC and held in Westminster in 2012, entitled Redressing the Democratic Deficit in Human Rights. The conference took place just as the research project’s findings were being published, and this in turn was timed to coincide with the high-level Brighton Conference on the future of the European Court of Human Rights.

According to Murray Hunt, ‘the conference, which marked the launch of our report, generated great interest worldwide. Many international organisations are waking up to the significance of parliaments in protecting human rights. But it’s striking that no-one had been asking how we enhance the role of parliaments in this regard: we need guidance. The conference brought together worlds of practice across disciplines – not just lawyers, but policymakers too.’

The next steps in the project are focused on building on this international appetite, and seeking in particular to come up with shared principles on the role of parliaments with respect to human rights and the rule of law. With follow-up funding from the AHRC, a conference took place in September 2015 (see inset box) which brought together those working in the field, internationally. For Murray Hunt, ‘the aim was to share examples of good practice in human rights from parliaments around the world, and to come up with some sort of internationally agreed guidelines for beefing-up the role of parliaments. And ultimately, for human rights to be respected consistently, across the globe.’

In the end, says Murray Hunt, this project is a great example of the importance of follow-up funding: ‘one of the things I’m grateful to the AHRC for is their commitment, and sustained interest. This project has been able to grow in scope and ambition because the AHRC kept up their support: there’s a lesson in that.’

Evidence-based
And what of the politicians who work in this area – what impact has the project had on them? Baroness Lister of Burtersett is a life peer in the House of Lords, and from 2012 to 2015 a member of the JCHR. For her, the kind of constructive, dispassionate critique that academic research is able to provide is a huge advantage when it comes to making policies evidence-based. ‘And having the benefit of this kind of review is quite unusual,’ she says. ‘I’m not aware of any other Committees that have had it.’

For Baroness Lister, the impact of the Parliaments and Human Rights project has been clear: ‘I’ve very much been the beneficiary of Murray’s work, as he’s found ways of making the JCHR more effective. The JCHR produces a lot of reports, as part of its legislative scrutiny. I’m not a lawyer, but Murray has always been there, helping to draft amendments, and encouraging Committee members to table them. As I understand it, this was all something that happened as a result of the research project – it was part of the ongoing attempt to ensure that human rights are considered in policymaking, as a matter of course.’

Follow on: International conference on Parliaments and Human Rights in September 2015
A major international conference on the Role of Parliaments in the Protection and Realisation of the Rule of Law and Human Rights took place in Westminster in September 2015. The next stage of the AHRC-funded research described on these pages, the conference attracted more than 100 delegates from around the world to discuss developments at the national, regional and international levels concerning the role of national parliaments in the protection and realisation of the rule of law and human rights.

Speakers included Gianni Magazzeni, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Professor Nico Schrijver Professor of International Law, Leiden University, Member of Dutch Senate and Executive Committee Member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, and Dr Josephine Ojiambo, Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth.

To mark the occasion, the AHRC launched a timeline on AHRC funded Human Rights Research and Policy-making: www.ahrc.ac.uk/research/impact/informingpublicpolicy
The wives of Ernest Hemingway

A novel by an AHRC-funded PhD student and International Placement Scheme award-holder is winning prizes and garnering public and critical acclaim, writes Carrie Dunn

Dr Naomi Wood’s novel ‘Mrs Hemingway’ won the 2014 Jerwood Fiction Uncovered Prize, was shortlisted for the Dylan Thomas Prize – and gained national prime-time media coverage through its selection for the Richard and Judy Book Club.

The book, submitted for Wood’s PhD at the University of East Anglia and published by Picador in 2014, charts the personal life of American writer Ernest Hemingway, Nobel Prize Winner and author of twentieth century classic novels such as A Farewell to Arms, For Whom the Bell Tolls and The Old Man and the Sea. A great deal has been written by scholars and critics about his macho persona, his struggle with alcoholism and his eventual suicide, but little has been written about his relationships with women, surprising perhaps considering he married four times.

‘What we know about Hemingway is a 1930s version of Hemingway: out in the public domain, fashioning an image for himself within the media, this he-mannish figure, seen on safari or on a big fishing trawler, the soldier, the bullfighter, this hyper-masculine image,’ says Dr Wood. ‘My aim in writing the novel was to give the private side of him, the domestic side of him, and what the four Hemingway wives saw in him.’

Wood came up with the idea for the project while sifting through Hemingway’s correspondence with the women in his life, and realising there was a significant gap in the studies of the author and his work.

‘There are mountains of material about him, but not a huge amount written about him from a female perspective,’ she says. ‘In the letters to his wives, he was much warmer and more sentimental than he seems in the mean economy of his prose. Nobody had written from the perspective of the four wives, which really fascinated me. You read so many accounts of the era and these women are really not given a voice; they can’t articulate their experience with him. So I had this idea, that was going to be really exciting, a re-appropriation of Hemingway from a woman’s experience.’

The manuscript was bought by Picador while Wood was still completing the PhD, meaning that she was receiving editorial advice from her academic supervisors as well as her publisher. Fortunately, there were not too many conflicts of interest.

‘Sometimes you worry with a creative piece, a clear decision is not always self-evident as it might be in a more empirical piece of research,’ she says. ‘It was very reassuring when they thought the same things and all recommended similar courses of action.’

Wood has always been interested in books: her first degree was in English Literature at the University of Cambridge, and after a time working in publishing, she applied to study an MA in Creative Writing at UEA – a long-held ambition.

‘I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do when I left my undergraduate degree,’ she admits. ‘I went into publishing because that was the obvious thing to do, but I would get frustrated at looking at books from the outside rather than the inside. I had always been really passionate about the Master’s degree at UEA, but thought I would do it a bit later in life.’

However, the university suggested that before she began the course she should gain a little more writing experience, prompting her to move to Paris and write her first book, The Godless Boys, published in 2011, which she then worked on during her MA study.

After graduating, she opted to stay on at UEA to work towards a PhD, where her tutors supported her through the application process for AHRC funding. The initial grant was for her research into the women of the Hemingway family – and she then won an award through the AHRC’s International Placement Scheme to travel to the Library of Congress to research their archives. As the AHRC marks its tenth anniversary, Wood is quick to thank them for the funding she received over a number of years, which she says has been integral to her success.

‘I spent two years researching and two years writing up the novel and writing a critical thesis as well on Hemingway texts, so the funding I received from the AHRC was crucial to getting the novel written that was very closely researched, and based on their actual lives,’ she explains. ‘While I was in England, I was looking at all the archives I could get here: all the biographies, all the novels, looking at the texts in the British Library, including first editions, which was exciting, and brilliant video records of the wives, which are in the British Library as well. As soon as I got to America I was looking at primary sources and looking at some special collections that the Library of Congress holds as well as visiting the JFK Library in Boston.’

The historical accuracy of the novel has been noted by literary reviewers: the Daily Telegraph observed that it felt ‘more real than many novels’, and the Daily Mail enthused, ‘whilst this is a fictionalised account based on known facts, it is so beautifully written, so true and so vivid that it eclipses anything strictly biographical.’ The AHRC funding that supported Wood’s painstaking research was crucial to ensuring that, she says.

‘I wanted to write the best I could – having the funding meant I didn’t have to get a part-time job, I didn’t have to space everything out, and it meant that I could finish it relatively quickly, especially in view of how much research there was to do,’ Wood explains.

‘Hemingway was so prolific: he spanned so many years and the book spans so many years that I had to do a huge amount of research in order to get everything right. The funding definitely enabled me to write that well-researched novel in a much shorter time – and that is hugely appreciated.”
On the trail of the fallow deer

An AHRC project overturned earlier theories about the origins of a much-loved species

You’ll have seen the European fallow deer in parks surrounding stately homes – but you probably won’t be aware of just how much impact their introduction has had in many countries. Ever since the Neolithic Era, humans have selectively transported and maintained this elegant animal, leaving us a record of migration, trade, behaviour and worldview.

That’s why the AHRC has funded a major international interdisciplinary project between 2011 and this year, led by Dr Naomi Sykes of the University of Nottingham, to examine the circumstances and cultural significance of this species’ diffusion across Europe.

‘When you go back in time, the arrival of a new animal is not something that’s happening by accident,’ Sykes says. ‘People are deliberately moving the animals. What we can study through the movement of animals is really the movement of people but also the movement of ideas and attitudes to the natural world as well.’

The project’s results are challenging the ‘received wisdom’ about the species, says Sykes. ‘I realised there was very little that was actually known about fallow deer – there was plenty of received wisdom that had been circulated in various texts.'
and then re-circulated until it was seen as ‘fact’ but, in reality, we know very little,’ she explains.

Fallow deer is the most widely distributed deer species on the planet, from the Caribbean to New Zealand, but as Sykes says, it is unclear how they got there and from where. ‘20,000 years ago was the last glacial maximum when we had a big lump of ice sat on top of Britain, and that pushed all the animals that did live in Britain before the glacial period away and down to southern Europe, and it’s always been suggested in the literature that the glacial refuge of the fallow deer is in Anatolia, in modern-day Turkey,’ says Sykes.

The project has combined examination of archaeological evidence with genetic studies and biochemical analysis of deer remains. ‘We’ve been employing all of these techniques to try to understand what’s going on, whether this deer population really is Anatolian, whether that last population is as endangered as we think, and how can it be that this deer species has gone global from what is a very small area,’ says Sykes.

And the results have been remarkable, declares Sykes. ‘Everything that we thought we knew about this species, and of course we didn’t know that much, is wrong. It doesn’t look like any deer [globally] have ever come from Anatolia. It looks as though that Anatolian population has never gone anywhere, and has gradually dwindled away and is becoming extinct due to issues of over-hunting.’

So if the European fallow deer isn’t originally from Anatolia, where did it come from?

Sykes thinks it could be next-door – in the Balkans. ‘It’s in the Roman period that we see the first major spread of fallow deer,’ she says. ‘I think the deer are being picked up in Bulgaria, which is where we have evidence for a cult of Artemis (later, Roman Diana), the goddess of hunting. We know that Artemis and Diana were closely associated with fallow deer – we’ve got all this incredible material of culture, beautiful golden drinking horns, all in the shape of fallow deer (see page 44), dedicated to the goddess, and they’re all in the same region as we find this little genetic population of fallow deer that we then start to find appearing across the Roman Empire. From the first century BC, they start to appear in Italy, Sicily, through to Portugal and Spain and of course into Britain as well.

What we’ve been able to show is that the spread of fallow deer across the Roman Empire is likely linked into the spread of new religious beliefs, something that’s being explored in the project’s exhibition at the museum of Fishbourne Roman Palace, in Sussex.’

But these Roman introductions to Britain went extinct, and did not return until a thousand years later – potentially just before the Norman Conquests and, again, possibly from the Balkans. These findings are stunning as historians refuse to countenance the idea that there were any formal trade networks between Britain and the Balkans at this point. Sykes thinks that this is missing the point.

‘If you think about pandas that we find in zoos across the world today, this has nothing to do with normal trade – it’s the exchange of special exotica, cultural icons, it’s about forming political allegiances, that is what the animals are reflecting,’ she says. ‘The timing of the fallow deer’s re-introduction to Britain also challenges the concept that all introduced species were transported by ‘invading peoples’. We always say, ‘Oh, it’ll have been the Romans’ or ‘It was the Normans’, that were responsible for changing biodiversity but that need not have been the case. Rather than an invading army it could actually just be one person, one anonymous person who went travelling, saw some beautiful deer and decided to transport some back as a gift. It could be as straightforward as that.’

Geneticist Dr Karis Baker is cautious about the DNA findings so far, but agrees. ‘There’s definitely something going on in the Balkans. We can’t say everything has come from there, we haven’t got enough samples to make that link definitively but we’ve got a few samples that are suggesting things. The problem is in these key areas, Turkey, Balkans, Greece, the climate is really hot and the samples are really old, so that’s the worst thing for DNA preservation.’

She is also keen to point out the importance of the deer that are in Anatolia, regardless of whether or not they are the source for the world’s European fallow deer population. ‘It is genetically distinct from anything else we
find anywhere else. We should still maintain that,” she says. “It doesn’t downgrade that as a population, it just alters the way we think about the conservation of the species.”

Sykes also highlights the importance of the project’s findings for modern deer management, sounding a note of caution about the thriving population in the UK: “You may hear every so often that there’s a need for a cull because large deer populations are responsible for environmental damage. The situation is actually more complex than this but we can say that it is, in part, a legacy of the medieval period. During the Middle Ages hunting was the pop culture and deer were nurtured, being kept in thousands of parks across Britain. At the same time top predators – the wolves, bears and lynx were exterminated. Like all fashions, the medieval hunting went out of fashion but the deer did not go away and, over the centuries, without any predators (human or carnivores) deer populations have increased. Today the management of wild deer could provide a sustainable source of free-range organic meat but many people don’t like the idea of eating venison, so much of it is exported to mainland Europe.”

“Because of this AHRC-funded project we have rewritten the natural and cultural history of this species”
Because of this AHRC-funded project we have rewritten the natural and cultural history of this species

So as well as tracing the history of the deer population, the project team have been working with the British Deer Society, the National Trust and inner-city schools to highlight the cultural significance of the fallow deer herds as well as the need to manage the populations – several National Trust properties are now selling fallow deer venison in their gift shops and cafes.

For Naomi Sykes, the AHRC’s tenth anniversary allows her to think about her work in relation to her career as a whole, much of it supported by the AHRC. The beginning of the AHRC in 2005 coincides with the start of my professional academic career,’ she says, ‘when I was appointed to my first lectureship in Archaeology. From this moment, through the subsequent ten years, support from the AHRC has been behind everything that I have achieved: my research projects, my publications, my career development and my ability to help the careers and lives of others within and outside the academy. From collaborative doctoral awards and research training networks to study leave and major international research projects, the AHRC has given me the time and resources to help preserve endangered skills, generate new knowledge about the past through cutting-edge interdisciplinary enquiry and render these findings relevant to humanity’s present and future. To make such a contribution to world culture was always my motivation for becoming an archaeologist and support from the AHRC has allowed, and continues to enable, me to do so.’

This motivation continues through her current work and, as the project enters its closing stages, Sykes is very pleased with the findings so far. ‘Because of this AHRC-funded project we have rewritten the natural and cultural history of this species, gaining insights into some of the highest-profile issues in archaeology,’ she says, ‘and, importantly, the work that we have done on ancient populations has significant implications for modern deer conservation and management, as well as food security.’

For further information, please go to: www.fallow-deer-project.net

Fallow deer rhyton from Panagyurishte, Bulgaria c. 400 BC.
A World at War

A new book is questioning some deep-seated assumptions about the Second World War

It’s hard to get away from the myth of plucky Britain’s fight against Nazi Germany during the darkest days of the Second World War, of the island race facing up to tyranny, alone. But that image of Britain’s isolation is misleading: as a new book puts it, ‘Britain did not fight the Second World War: the British Empire did.’

Subaltern Studies

Yasmin Khan, who is Associate Professor of History at Oxford University, describes in The Raj at War: A People’s History of India’s Second World War how Britain’s survival and eventual success in that conflict depended largely upon the contribution of its massive Empire, and especially of the Indian subcontinent. Two and a half million volunteers from South Asia served in the Second World War. And then there were the millions more who supported those in the front line: ‘the boot-makers, the tailors, the whole support system behind every soldier’.

This contribution has largely been forgotten, Yasmin Khan argues. And not just because it has suited people in Britain to downplay it: in India too, this history has tended to be overlooked, because it doesn’t fit easily with the nationalist narrative of resistance to British rule.

In telling this neglected story, Yasmin Khan isn’t just aiming to give proper credit to Britain’s former colonies for their part in defeating the Nazis. It’s important, too, to understand how those colonies were changed as a result of the conflict: ‘the Second World War has been written and thought about as a European war,’ she says. ‘Less attention has been paid to the way that colonised societies were affected.’

And of course, of all Britain’s Imperial possessions, India was among the most deeply affected by the Second World War, partly because it saw some of the fighting: as Yasmin Khan points out, there were times in 1942 when the country looked like it would fall to the Japanese. But the effects of the War within India aren’t straightforward: ‘it polarised people: activists were jailed for opposing the British, while others joined up to fight alongside them.’

Yasmin Khan’s book is in the tradition of Indian Subaltern Studies: written ‘from the bottom up,’ rather than focusing just on members of elite groups. And it takes in much more than just the servicemen who were doing the fighting: we hear also about nurses, bearers, political activists, road builders, and Bengali famine victims (British policy in 1942 of destroying rice stocks and fishing boats in coastal Bengal, ahead of a possible Japanese invasion, led to mass starvation). Yasmin Khan argues that its victims should be counted as part of the global war dead, just like the civilian victims of Stalingrad or Hiroshima.

But writing history from the bottom up is difficult, since those at the bottom often don’t have the means or the time to record their experiences: it would be much easier to rely on the diaries and letters of India’s elite, or of the Europeans who were in the country during the War. Yasmin Khan collected her material the hard way, mostly through first-hand interviews: ‘this is an elderly generation now,’ she says. ‘So it’s important that we record their experiences while we still can.’

The book has already received a good deal of coverage both in the UK and in India (and of course, this is a story that belongs as much to Pakistan and Bangladesh as to modern-day India). And the effects of this period are still being felt. The political situation that led to independence for India and Pakistan was largely created by the Second World War, with the British no longer having the resources to assert Imperial control.

The most important place in the world?

The Raj at War is one of the outputs of a project, supported by the AHRC, which has looked at the social transformations brought about by the War in different countries under British rule. For his part of it, Ashley Jackson, Professor of Imperial and Military History at King’s College London, has focused on Iran and Iraq, and how they have been shaped

Our work is part of a bigger movement in history writing

by their experiences of the Second World War. But again, this is a story that has been relatively neglected. Britain invaded both Iran and Iraq during the War, using them as major supply lines to the Soviets: ‘at key points in 1941/2,’ says Ashley Jackson, ‘Churchill thought that the Persian Gulf region was more important than anywhere else in the world, apart from Britain, to Britain’s war strategy. But that’s not a common understanding.’

And again, the focus of Ashley Jackson’s research (which will also take the form of a book – An Imperial World at War) is not so much on the battles, as on what was happening beyond them. ‘Our work is part of a bigger movement in history writing,’ he says, ‘which looks more at the Home Front, and sees this more as a world war.’

Things like logistics come to seem much more important, therefore. This is a story of interconnectedness: of the battlefield with the Home Front, of the British war effort with other countries all around the globe, in a conflict that could reach almost anywhere. The War could have an effect even in the mountainous regions of Iran, for example.

In the case of Iran and Iraq, also, understanding what happened in the War helps us to understand the present. As Ashley Jackson says, ‘many people in Iran today still see Britain as their main foreign enemy, with the US as actors on our behalf. But in the Second World War, southern Iran was effectively a British colonial zone. Iran’s sense of encirclement and distrust of the West has a lot to do with that.’

Similarly, according to Ashley Jackson, ‘at the time of the Second World War, fascist and anti-Semitic ideas very much informed some strands of Arab nationalism in Iraq, and they became part of the underpinnings of the Ba’ath party. These ideas became part of the political culture of the Middle East.’

This kind of history writing, then, is a corrective to the general narrative that focuses on the Western powers, their battles and their Home Fronts. ‘If we don’t challenge that,’ says Ashley Jackson, ‘and if we aren’t aware of this bigger story, then our understanding of the Second World War will remain incomplete.’
Remembered hills

It was what Louise Hardwick calls her ‘Indiana Jones moment’. A few months into her research project on Caribbean literature, she uncovered a watercolour of Martinique that had been squirreled away in the archives of the British Library.

The picture showed a flat plain of sugar cane fields, with volcanic hills in the distance. Louise Hardwick realised that she recognised this distinctive landscape: it was the place where Martinican author Joseph Zobel was born. An obscure image, previously incorrectly labelled, could now be used by those around the world who teach Zobel’s work, to bring his writings to life.

Born exactly 100 years ago, Zobel is best known for his childhood memoir Black Shack Alley which was turned into the award-winning 1983 film Sugar Cane Alley. It is an account of a young boy raised by his grandmother in a post-slavery – but still plantation-based – Martinique. Zobel was influenced by the Negritude movement, which asserted a shared black identity among the descendants of slaves, in opposition to French colonialism. Zobel died in 2006, and Louise Hardwick is writing the first scholarly study of his work, which includes notable sculptures as well as poems and short stories.

New partnerships
The Zobel project is supported under the AHRC’s ‘Translating Cultures’ theme (see panel opposite), which explores the ways in which cultural works play a role in shaping contemporary debates on multiculturalism, language and identities. At the same time, it is helping to forge new collaborations between university researchers and those outside of academia. After a D.Phil funded by the AHRC, Louise Hardwick, who is a Lecturer in French at the University of Birmingham, now holds an AHRC Early Career Leadership Fellowship, which involves working in new ways with non-academic institutions – in Louise Hardwick’s case, she’s teamed up with the British Library, exploring their archives, and working with them to bring her research to a wider audience.

Should more of us in the Anglophone world be aware of Zobel’s legacy? ‘Zobel is unusual,’ says Louise Hardwick, ‘in that his voice is so different from other French Caribbean writers of the same period because he wrote from a non-elite perspective. Zobel depicts everyday people.

The AHRC themes
The AHRC Themes were identified through the Future Directions for Arts and Humanities Research consultation in 2009. This indicated support for a number of research areas that were likely to shape or change aspects of multiple research fields over future years. These areas were grouped under four themes:

- Care for the Future: Thinking Forward through the Past
- Digital Transformations in the Arts and Humanities
- Science in Culture
- Translating Cultures

Thematic programmes at the AHRC provide a focus for specific research challenges in the arts and humanities supporting a range of award types from developmental projects through to large grants. Bringing ideas into focus through a research theme often enables different kinds of partnerships, knowledge exchange, public policy, and international activities.

Examples of projects funded under our themes are highlighted through this publication, beginning with Translating Cultures through which Louise Hardwick’s project is funded.
Louise Hardwick realised that she recognised this distinctive landscape: it was the place where Martinican author Joseph Zobel was born. He uses a different kind of language, with an accessible, vibrant style. He was also a great innovator and was one of the earliest authors to write using Creole terms – especially in his descriptions of plantation society. He writes about the African-influenced laghia, for example – a dance that depicts a mock combat, like the Brazilian capoeira. He writes about the poorest members of society: even after the abolition of slavery, he shows how little things had changed for these people.

For Louise Hardwick, then, Zobel speaks about aspects of colonialism which have tended to be overlooked. And the ultimate aim of her project, she says, is to change the way that Zobel is considered by writing the first study to consider his entire life’s output. ‘Because of the global success of Black Shack Alley and Sugar Cane Alley, Zobel is seen as something of a one-hit-wonder. But his cultural legacy is far greater than that.’

AHRC THEMES

Translating Cultures

The need for understanding and communication across diverse cultures is stronger than ever. The Translating Cultures theme addresses this need by looking at the role of translation, in its broadest sense, in the transmission and sharing of languages, values, beliefs, histories and narratives. It addresses issues of substantial policy relevance in areas such as cultural exchange and diplomacy, multiculturalism, tolerance, identities and migration, explore issues such as youth language and online language and identity, and promotes opportunities for researchers in all these fields to work across language areas and across disciplines.
Can we create better research by bringing together the expertise of communities and universities?’

All together now

Whether they’re physical or virtual, we all belong to communities: communities based around where we live, work or go to school, or what we believe in or are interested in. **Matt Shinn** explores a major cross-Council research programme that is researching communities and their importance to us.

**Connected Communities** is a research programme that involves five of the Research Councils led by the AHRC. Its aim is to help us understand the changing nature of communities, to put them in their historical and cultural contexts, and to understand how they affect our quality of life.

It’s a large and significant programme: since 2010 it has supported over 300 separate research projects, bringing together over 700 academics and over 500 community partners, in over 900 different collaborations.

And its approach is distinctive: one of the things about Connected Communities is that it doesn’t just bring together research on communities, it involves communities...
themselves in the research process. It’s about building powerful and lasting relationships between researchers and communities, putting communities at the centre of research that concerns them. And it’s about working across disciplinary boundaries. Across a number of themes, including community health and wellbeing, community creativity, heritage, prosperity and regeneration, community values and participation, sustainable community environments, places and spaces, and community cultures, diversity and cohesion, it draws on the distinctive expertise and experiences of many different academics and community groups. Projects have covered everything from community food to community energy. Together, they’re showing how communities can help us respond to the problems of the contemporary world, and make the most of the opportunities that we have, to enhance our quality of life.

Living knowledge
Keri Facer is Professor of Educational and Social Futures at the University of Bristol, and co-leader of the Connected Communities programme. For her, ‘what’s different about this programme is its asking; can we create better research by bringing together the  

Unearthing Hidden Assets and Scaling-up Co-design
Connected Communities has seen a sustained collaboration, over a number of different projects, between researchers who work in design and architecture at the Open University, and the Glass-House’s Community-led Design team.

Unearthing Hidden Assets, for example, has involved looking at how the co-design process (where end-users have a say in shaping services and physical spaces) can help communities understand and appreciate the resources (tangible and intangible) that they already have, whether that’s the skills of the people within them, or the spaces that communities have available to them. This project has resulted in various practical resources that communities can use. The idea of Scaling-up Co-design, meanwhile, is to use co-design methodology in the non-profit sector, to build up capacity. It’s about developing forms of co-design practice that can be replicated easily and cheaply, helping organisations to scale-up their practices without needing more money, and helping those organisations that don’t have the advantage of working with academics.

Techniques include the use of ‘cascade boxes’, which encourage people to identify aspects of their local community that they appreciate or that they think need attention, before passing the box on, so that others down the line can be stimulated to add their own ideas. This has shown itself to be an effective way to identify opportunities for better design, for changing communities for the better. Other techniques include organising workshops that look at the current projects that civil society organisations are involved with, identifying where there are opportunities to share skills and resources. 

Above: The Stories of Change project is investigating energy – past, present and future. The ‘Future Works’ strand investigates energy and manufacturing across the English Midlands, including at Portland Works, Sheffield, the location of these postboxes. Image: Julia Udall


Connected Communities takes people out of their comfort zones

Hyperlocal Journalism
One of the strands of the Creative Citizens project, which aims to advance our understanding of the role of creativity in communities, relates to hyperlocal journalism: news relating to very small communities, often using social media. By connecting-up a large number of individuals who are producing hyperlocal journalism, the research was able to make the case that these individuals were part of a much wider movement. It also provided important opportunities to learn about good practice and new technologies, and to strengthen the professional networks of hyperlocal journalists. The research has already informed an OFCOM report in this area: its 2012 Communications Market Report gives the first figures that show the scale of hyperlocal reporting in the UK, as part of OFCOM’s work in understanding emerging news media, business models and trends. In Keri Facer’s words, ‘the project has made the phenomenon of hyperlocal journalism visible, and helped us to understand how it’s contributing to a sense of community.’

Both/and
The community partners who take part in the Connected Community programme are extremely diverse, ranging from large national organisations and charities that sometimes carry out their own research, through to smaller voluntary organisations, and individual community activists and artists. For many of these groups, Connected Communities gives them a rare opportunity to step back from their everyday business, to address fundamental questions about what they do, and develop new insights about their work.

And the idea of community groups ‘co-producing’ research is central to this. Connected Communities aims to go beyond the old, ‘instrumental’ relationship between academics and communities, in which researchers might simply take a community as an object of study. Connected Communities is about community groups being in at the beginning, helping to shape the research questions that the project is seeking to answer and the methodology it will use, drawing as much on the combined expertise, experience and aspirations of individuals working in those communities as on those of academics.

This means that the Connected Communities programme contributes to a wider debate about how new knowledge, ideas and practices should be produced today. About who has the expertise and
knowledge to understand what’s going on in communities: the people who are living in those communities, or those who are able to draw on wider scholarly resources to contextualise them. Connected Communities is an attempt to answer these questions by saying “both/and” – what we need is both the communities and the scholars, both those with the passionate personal interest in their communities, and those with the robust, systematic modes of inquiry and comparison.

As such, Connected Communities provides a distinctive take on the question of how universities can contribute to the public good: namely by being deeply engaged with the people and communities around them, and tapping into whatever sources of expertise and insight are available in communities themselves. It’s about marrying on-the-ground experience and theory, action and reflection, what’s known at the local level and what exists in the research literature. It offers the prospect of research which is both practically useful and intellectually groundbreaking.

And what kind of legacy can we expect from Connected Communities? There are the various tangible things that projects produce, the toolkits and exhibitions, as well as websites, and guidelines on good practice. There is a new book series dedicated to publishing Connected Communities research, academic papers and scholarly publications. Some of the most important legacies of this research, though, are invisible: there are the new skills that academic and community participants have developed, and the new confidence they have to put those skills into action. As the forthcoming report on the programme observes, the programme has helped a new generation of community and university researchers to ‘grow up collaborative,’ taking for granted the potential benefits of partnerships between academics and communities. Of course, through the new networks and relationships that it has helped to create, the Connected Communities programme can itself be understood as a means of forming new communities.

“Community” is a continual performance, made up of tiny interactions. Maybe we need to think of it less as a noun, and more as a verb.”

Keri Facer

**Connected Communities in facts and figures**

- 12 Large Grants
- 900+ Partnerships with Project/Community partners
- 30 Call including highlight notices
- 300+ Awards funded as of Jan 2014
- 140+ Artistic outputs
- 250 Community heritage partnerships supported with Heritage Lottery Fund
- 5 Research Councils involved in the programme
- 140+ Artistic outputs

**Digital Totem Pole**

A totem pole that was created in Wester Hailes, a large estate to the south of Edinburgh, made reference to the history of the neighbourhood, with motifs carved into it showing the area’s distinctive architecture, and notable events from the past. The pole was embedded with QR codes, allowing local residents to share their own memories and photos on a social history Facebook page, and write stories for a new digital newspaper. The Digital Totem Pole has come to serve as a visual representation of the local community.
The breakthrough moment
For many participants in the Connected Communities programme, the experience of being involved in it has opened up new avenues. Sophia de Souza is Chief Executive of the Glass House, a national charity that helps people work collaboratively, through community-led design. She describes the Glass House’s involvement in the Media, Community and the Creative Citizen project (see page 48) as ‘the breakthrough moment for us, the first project where the community partners were really valued as co-designers of research.’ Other projects have followed for the Glass House, such as Empowering Design Practices (which uses historic places of worship as catalysts for connecting communities).

‘The fact that Connected Communities is such a big programme has given us real scope to develop,’ says Sophia de Souza. ‘We’ve really seen how the richness and quality of collaborations has increased between projects. This is a bold programme, which allows space for experimentation, and for academics and communities to work together differently, driven by a desire to help people.’

For Theo Zamenopoulos, who is Senior Lecturer in Design at the Open University, ‘by working with community organisations, you start to develop research questions that come from a completely different perspective, and that are driven by reality. This is one of the most innovative, flexible and open programmes that I’ve seen, and its innovativeness comes from the way that it exploits the power of networks, the power of connection. Working with community organisations, to shape research proposals together: that has done a massive amount for communities and community organisations, as well as for academics.’

Noun or verb?
Finally, is Connected Communities leading to new ideas of what we mean by ‘community’ itself? For The Performing Abergavenny project team, it’s clear that what is coming out of their project is the idea that community should be thought of less as a thing, and more as a process. As Keri Facer observes – ‘this project is helping us to realise that “community” is a continual performance, made up of tiny interactions. Maybe we need to think of it less as a noun, and more as a verb.’

For further information:
www.connected-communities.org

Tangible Memories
Older people who go into care homes often have to give up their homes and possessions, and so lose much of their connection with their past.

Working in three care homes in Bristol, the Tangible Memories project has brought together an interdisciplinary team, including digital artists and makers, learning researchers, computer scientists and social historians, as well as older people themselves and those who work with them. It has involved co-designing and co-producing a set of new digital tools that can attach stories to objects which are personally meaningful to older people, so that they can hold on to important memories, and share them with others if they choose, and so connect with the people around them and build a greater sense of community.

The project has produced a wide range of outputs that can be used in other care homes, including the Story Creator app, which prompts residents to remember information about their lives. A therapeutic musical rocking chair, meanwhile, responds to motion by producing sounds that mean something to the care home resident who’s sitting in it: sounds from nature, poetry or music.
‘Let them incriminate themselves’

Garrotting someone with wire is better than battering them to death, if you don’t want to get yourself covered in blood. Still, it’s probably a good idea not to wear your best clothes while you’re doing it, especially if the clothes are white.
Let them incriminate themselves’ – that was the advice of former death squad member Anwar Congo, in the award-winning documentary The Act of Killing. The film tells the story of events in Indonesia in 1965/6, when, following a CIA-backed military coup, there were mass murders of anyone suspected of being a Communist. The army recruited gangsters to do their dirty work: over a million trade unionists, intellectuals, and ethnic Chinese people were killed in less than a year.

The film focuses on one gang in the city of Medan, who killed thousands. They’d run a racket in cinema tickets, until the army told them that if the Communists took over, Hollywood films would be banned. But Indonesia is a country where those who ordered the killings are still in power, while in hundreds of towns and villages, perpetrators and survivors continue to live next door to each other. The perpetrators are still seen as heroes in Indonesia, and are proud of having saved the country, as they see it: the killers in the film are for the most part unrepentant.

Acting out

What cinema-goers might not have realised is that The Act of Killing started out as part of a research project, entitled Genre and Genocide, funded by the AHRC. As a PhD student, director Josh Oppenheimer had attended a conference on the work of anthropologist and film-maker Jean Rouch, organised by Professor Joram ten Brink of the University of Westminster. Supported by an AHRC grant, Oppenheimer then began filming in Indonesia, using some of Rouch’s techniques.

In particular, Oppenheimer used Rouch’s method of re-enactment, as a revolutionary way of making documentaries. The Act of Killing tells its story in this way: the killers were encouraged to re-create their murders in cinematic genres of their choosing – everything from Hollywood gangster films to lavish musicals (and, being obsessed by cinema, they’d carried out the killings in the first place in different film styles). As Joram ten Brink, who is one of the film’s producers, as well as Principal Investigator on the Genocide and Genre project, says: ‘If you just put people in front of the camera in the old-fashioned way, you get only a little bit of their life. But in this film we included re-enactments of the killers’ dreams and nightmares, as well as recreations of what they did. You get a much deeper understanding of their psychology, and of

This is a mirror held up to all human beings

We couldn’t have made the film without the AHRC”
Following its release in 2012, *The Act of Killing* won a BAFTA for Best Documentary, and was nominated for an Academy Award. Perhaps more importantly, though, the film has also helped to ‘change the conversation’ in Indonesia, as Joram ten Brink puts it: ‘the country’s not the same, because of this film.’ A network of human rights activists helped to circulate the documentary within the country, while as a result of it being shown, for the first time in Indonesia the main news magazine started to interview survivors of the killings, having devoted an entire issue to the subject. And as part of the same AHRC Genocide and Genre project, a second film has now been produced, dealing with events more from the victims’ perspective: entitled *The Look of Silence*, this, too, has been met with near-universal critical acclaim.

Out of the ghetto

For *Act of Killing* director Josh Oppenheimer, ‘we couldn’t have made the film without the AHRC saying “these are important research questions, and this is an important innovation in film form, language and production. It’s worth taking a chance on.”’ Four years of research went into the documentary: ‘for me,’ says Josh Oppenheimer, ‘film-making is a method of investigation. And this is a method of film-making that makes visible the stories that people tell themselves, to cope with what they’ve done.’ But the killers are not giving evidence – ‘this is no sober effort to remember, such as you see in those who are removed from power, and forced to testify.’ At times surreal, the end result is a captivating piece of cinema.

The awards that it’s won show that *The Act of Killing* hasn’t been ghettoised as an experimental film or an activist film, or an academic project. But when a film is different, and has been made in a fundamentally different way, and it breaks through and gets mainstream acceptance, it opens a space for more adventurous, more intelligent, more experimental work.’ And certainly, it’s had an impact in the country where it was made: ‘the film has come to Indonesia like the child in *The Emperor’s New Clothes*: it’s created a space where Indonesians can talk about the most vexing problems that their society faces.’ But ultimately, says Josh Oppenheimer, this is a film about all of us: ‘this is the underbelly of our reality. This is a mirror held up to all human beings: it’s about how we live with guilt, and about how we create our world through storytelling’.
Glasgow’s shooting star

One of the UK’s greatest architects has been explored by one of the largest AHRC projects of the last ten years. **Matt Shinn** reports on one of the most under-researched of ‘great architects’
In this country, do we make the most of our superstars of architecture?

It’s true that Charles Rennie Mackintosh has been marketed as a tourist draw in his native Glasgow – both as a key figure at the turning point between the Victorian era and the Modern Movement, and an architect who is closely associated with the city, just as it was emerging as one of the most important in the British Empire.

And in terms of popular appeal, Mackintosh’s star has been in the ascendant at least since 1968, which was the centenary of his birth, and which saw a retrospective exhibition of his work in Edinburgh and London. He is an architect who is loved both by his fellow professionals, as an individual creative talent who rarely compromised, and by the general public, for his accessibility and the sheer beauty of his work – he is a master of space, light and form. Mackintosh has a distinctive quality – you know when something is by him. And there’s a breadth to his output, from his famous interiors to his works on paper; Mackintosh was a gifted designer and watercolourist, as well as architect.

But Mackintosh’s architectural work has been conspicuously under-researched, without there even being a definitive list of the buildings that he worked on, and no over-arching analysis of their evolution or importance. That at least was true until 2009, when The Hunterian at the University of Glasgow, which is the custodian of Mackintosh’s estate and holds the pre-eminent collection of his work, was awarded a major AHRC grant, to produce the first full assessment of Mackintosh’s development and achievements as an architect.

Precious survivals

The project Mackintosh Architecture: Context, Making and Meaning is one of the largest that the AHRC has supported in its first ten years. It was led by Professor Pamela Robertson, who is a Senior Curator at The Hunterian, and was delivered with valuable input from Historic Scotland and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. ‘What made the project possible,’ she says, ‘was the existence of the “job books” of Mackintosh’s architectural practice. These were given to the University some years ago, as they detailed most of the projects undertaken by Mackintosh’s practice; they provided the bedrock of our research.’

Using a combination of archival research and building surveys and analysis, which helped to identify construction methods and materials in his surviving structures, work on the project started in 2010. ‘And even while it was underway,’ says Pamela Robertson, ‘events served to underline the vulnerability of Mackintosh’s work, and the imbalance between his great reputation as an architect and the small number of precious survivals among his buildings.’ In May 2014 Mackintosh’s Glasgow School of Art, widely seen as one of the most important in the UK, was ravaged by fire – the interior of the library was destroyed, and parts of the rest of the building severely damaged.

One stop shop

The completion of the Mackintosh Architecture project was marked with an exhibition at The Hunterian – this was the first major show ever to be devoted to Mackintosh’s architecture. The exhibition is moving to RIBA in London in February 2015.

“Without the support of the AHRC, this project simply wouldn’t have happened”
The completion of the project was marked by the first major show ever to be devoted to Mackintosh’s architecture.”

But the main output of the project is a website – www.mackintosh-architecture.gla.ac.uk. For Pamela Robertson ‘the website is accessible – it is as much use to students (it was tested in schools) as it is to fellow architects and academics. It is something that can be used around the world, which is in keeping with Mackintosh’s global appeal. And of course, with over 3,000 images on the site, visiting it is a rich visual experience.’

The new website is a ‘one stop shop’ for anyone interested in Mackintosh, bringing together material from a wide range of sources. It includes images and data from the ‘job books,’ a catalogue raisonné of over 1,200 drawings by Mackintosh and other members of his architectural practice, analytical essays, and biographies of key clients, contractors and suppliers. All of this material is being made available for free, and the site has already been used extensively by the National Trust for Scotland, Historic Scotland, and the Glasgow School of Art.

And not only is this a fantastic resource for Mackintosh fans, says Pamela Robertson, but it also represents ‘a model for comparable work on a single figure: an example of how to provide an overview of the work of any significant individual.’

**Revaluations**

For Pamela Robertson, Mackintosh Architecture has aimed to do justice to ‘Glasgow’s shooting star,’ allowing his full output as an architect to be assessed, and for his achievements as a key figure in architecture at the turn of the twentieth century to be fully understood. But the view of Mackintosh that emerges from the project is rather different from the romantic myth of the isolated genius, which had previously been associated with him. ‘What comes across is someone who is very much rooted in Scottish architectural traditions, but who is also plugged in to what was going on in the UK and internationally. And Mackintosh comes to seem more of a pragmatic architect, who, as a member of a professional practice, was closely concerned with the requirements of his clients. His buildings aren’t immaculate conceptions, whose only function is aesthetic.’

The project has restored some of the context of Mackintosh’s work, in other words, by showing his interactions with a complex network of clients, contractors and suppliers. And it has helped to expand awareness of his work, beyond the few, high-status buildings that he is best known for, to include some of the humbler projects with which he was involved.

Finally, according to Pamela Robertson, this project is one of the highlights of the AHRC’s first ten years, and something to celebrate as we mark its anniversary. ‘The AHRC has really made the difference, helping to stimulate further worldwide interest in a major British architect,’ she says. ‘Without the support of the AHRC, this project simply wouldn’t have happened. And what is really laudable is that the AHRC were prepared to fund a project at this scale. Nobody else could have done that’.
You could say that archaeology was in Andy Wigley’s blood. Growing up in the village of Pontesbury in Shropshire, he says, meant that he spent a lot of his time ‘scrambling up the Iron Age hill fort nearby.’

Then, supported by the AHRC’s predecessor, the Arts and Humanities Research Board, Andy had the chance to take his interest further. One of the earliest AHRB funded doctoral students, he studied for a PhD at the University of Sheffield between 1998 and 2001, on the prehistoric landscape of the Central Welsh Marches. That meant putting the Iron Age hill forts that he loves (and that abound along the England/Wales border) into a wider context.

In particular, Andy’s work involved tapping in to the vast body of archaeological information that is built up through the UK’s planning process. When planning applications are made, detailed assessments are made of the importance of any archaeological sites that may be affected by new building: sometimes, too, new discoveries are made during construction work. When all of these snapshots are put together, a bigger picture emerges. ‘Planning information is a great resource for archaeologists,’ says Andy, ‘and using it helps us to understand the pattern of Iron Age settlement, in particular. Otherwise this material would just sit on a shelf, with only planners looking at it.’

Working for his PhD also enabled Andy to make an important discovery about himself. ‘At that time I thought I was going to stay in academia, and so I was studying for a Higher Education teaching qualification. Some of the students in my teaching group approached me, and said that they were dyslexic. That led me to research dyslexia, to find out how I might adapt my teaching methods to help people who were affected by it. But as I read up about it, I began to think “this sounds very familiar”: it turned out that I, too, had been living with dyslexia, without realising it. The AHRB were fantastic, though – they helped to get me additional IT support. That might not have been the case with a different funding body.’

Unexpected benefits

Andy didn’t become an academic after all. Instead, since completing his doctorate he has worked in a range of archaeological roles for Shropshire County Council, including advising farmers and landowners on how to manage and protect the historical features that they might have in their fields. Now as the Council’s Historic Environment Manager he deals with all of the archaeological issues that arise through the Council’s work and has responsibility for a combined team of thirteen archaeologists and Conservation Officers. That means working on the same planning and development proposals that he used in his PhD, applying his knowledge of archaeology to identify sites of importance, while at the same time taking into account the other kinds of interest – especially economic – that there might be in those sites.

Andy’s work also involves helping to provide public access to historical locations, and providing the interpretation materials that enable people to understand what they’re looking at. A major recent project that he has been involved with is part of the Heritage Lottery Fund’s Landscape Partnership scheme, helping to improve the conservation and interpretation of the Stiperstones and Corndon Hill sites, both of them rich in archaeological features, in the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. All of this means that people in Shropshire can have a deeper connection to the county.

Though he’s not an academic, Andy still makes use of the grounding in the historic environment that his PhD gave him. ‘It helps me to set priorities for our work, and deal with our case load. It enables me to analyse disparate information, and make evidence-based decisions. I wouldn’t have been able to do that without the AHRB’s support.’

As Andy Wigley says himself, he is a good example of how support for arts and humanities research, and for the people who carry it out, can bring unexpected benefits. At the point that the AHRC supports PhD students, it doesn’t know exactly how its funding will pay off, but there are many different ways that it can do so. Now with the AHRC’s tenth anniversary, I hope that more people will appreciate its crucial role in supporting the development of researchers.

‘I see my work as a way of giving something back for the public support that I’ve received,’ says Andy. ‘And my career shows how arts and humanities research can make a valuable contribution to the public good, in the widest sense’
From better workplaces to anti-theft bike stands: designing for the 21st century

The Designing for the 21st Century programme was the first of the AHRC’s major investments in the Creative Economy, writes Matt Shinn

‘Design is one of those subjects that’s owned by lots of different disciplines,’ says Tom Inns, who is Director of the Glasgow School of Art, and was Director of the Designing for the 21st Century programme. In everything from architecture to engineering and applied arts, through to fashion, computing and communications, design is an integral element in our lives. The idea of the five-year, £6.5 million programme was to bring together some of the diverse communities that exist around design, and to show how design might be used in new ways. The programme was one of the first pieces of substantive research investment in the UK Creative Economy by the AHRC. A joint initiative with the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), it aimed to create new networks of design researchers, practitioners and end-users, building a shared understanding of the ideas, cultures, languages and methods found within different design communities, and stimulating new kinds of design thinking, to help meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Beyond open plan?
The Welcoming Workplace project, for example, was focused on two of the grand challenges that are currently facing western societies. First, there are a growing number of older workers, who are retiring later. And at the same time, the work that we do in offices is changing. Today, many of the repetitive processes that once occupied vast numbers of office workers are carried out by computers: we’re seeing a new type of work emerging, based on the application of theoretical knowledge, and on cultures of collaboration.

The project looked at ways in which the office environment could be redesigned, to provide greater levels of comfort and flexibility for older workers, enabling them to participate fully in the knowledge economy. It used a range of design research methods (including testing of solutions in situ), to learn about the needs of older workers in knowledge-based industries – it looked in particular at research chemists, process engineers and financial analysts, in different countries around the world. Older workers, it found, often struggle particularly with ‘clean desk’ policies: they are also badly affected by noise and distraction, and are especially sensitive to the environment around them.

The project resulted in some clear recommendations for alternatives to traditional open-plan offices, as well as an exhibition, Living Proof, which was held at the London Design Festival, and which showcased some of these new designs. The study’s findings were referenced in guidance from the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology on older workers, and helped to shape specifications produced by the British Council for Offices. And they’ve had a practical effect on how some major industry players (such as GlaxoSmithKline and Ricoh) design their offices: global manufacturer Plantronics even built an entire facility in Swindon, based on the study’s recommendations.

According to project leader Jeremy Myerson, who is Director of the Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design at the Royal College of Art, ‘most research projects go very deep in a narrow area, but this one allowed for big ideas. It created a novel amalgam of disciplines: I was working closely with psychologists and social anthropologists, for example. And

Design for the times

The growing importance of services, economically, socially and culturally, has led to the emerging discipline of service design, which takes a systematic approach in making services more user-friendly, and relevant to customers. At the same time, we’re seeing university-based researchers increasingly looking to exploit their research by setting up commercial enterprises, many of them offering services – especially in science and technology.

Seeking to marry these two trends together was the project Designing Services in Science and Technology-based Enterprises. It aimed to stimulate a conversation about services design, especially within science and technology-based enterprises, by bringing together social scientists and service designers, entrepreneurs, researchers working within computing and environmental sciences, and practitioners from large IT services companies. It led to science and technology-based enterprises being paired-up with design companies, to give them access to design approaches and design tools, such as scenario creation, modelling and paper prototyping, to help them develop their services.
It all involves thinking about services from the perspective of end-users

**Design against crime**

For many European cities, cycling is the way forward: helping to cut down on pollution, and so creating greener, more pleasant spaces, as well as doing some good for the cyclists themselves. But the intentions of governments and councils, in encouraging more of us to get on our bikes, won’t amount to much if those bikes are continually being stolen.

The Bike Off 2 project aimed to get around this problem, and help unchain the full benefits of two-wheeled transport. It involved incorporating anti-theft measures, based on research, into the design of everything from bicycles themselves, to their locks and the places where they’re left. It set new standards in terms of design methodologies and user evaluation, and has fed through into better products being on the market.
In all these areas the arts and humanities bring something distinctive

Designing for the 21st century in facts and figures

£6.5 million funding in total – £3.25 million supported by AHRC £3.25 million from the EPSRC

The Programme funded 21 Phase 1 Research Cluster Projects that ran from Jan – Dec 2005

Over 2000 participants were involved in these events

During Phase 2 of the programme 19 substantive research projects were supported between Dec 2006 and Jun 2009 with Pis and CoI from over 30 different Institutions

Researchers from 65 different HEIs were involved in over 100 workshops during this 12 month period

the research was ahead of its time – the retirement age has since increased.’

And how does arts and humanities research contribute in the application of design? ‘Things like healthcare and wellbeing are complex problems, where you can’t just rely on technology to provide solutions.

You need lateral investigations of the human condition: the ability to deal with ambiguity, and to understand the lessons of history. In all these areas, the arts and humanities bring something distinctive.’

Would this help?

The Ideal States project, meanwhile, looked at ways of using design principles to improve healthcare interventions. The work included finding ways of increasing patient agency in stroke rehabilitation: by assembling data that’s often only interpretable by health professionals, and using motion capture, stroke patients can be shown, in real time, exactly what they are doing as they try to regain their motor skills. The project also included work on visualising pathogens – developing ways of interpreting microbiologists’ data, to show the spread of bugs in virtual wards, and so help hospital staff to know where to clean. And it involved studies that were carried out for the National Institute of Health Research, on end-of-life care for people with dementia, giving family members more and better information to help them make decisions, and more control over what’s happening to their loved ones.

‘It all involves thinking about services from the perspective of end-users,’ says project leader Professor Alastair Macdonald, who is Senior Researcher at the Glasgow School of Art. ‘The contribution of the arts and humanities in all this comes from the participative co-design process, in which stakeholders are closely involved: their views are sought right from the start. Traditional research might involve asking questions at the start, but with design input, there’s a lot of emphasis on prototyping early, and mock-up solutions. We’re continually asking the question “would this help?” It’s an iterative process.’

And according to Alastair Macdonald, there’s a wider point here: ‘healthcare professionals often think in terms of pathology, not patient experience. But there’s more to care than just the treatment of symptoms – we think about the totality of experience of the person in the bed.’

Into the sandpit

For Tom Inns, the achievement of the Designing for the 21st Century programme goes beyond the accomplishments of its individual projects. ‘A couple of things really emerged from the programme,’ he says. ‘The first is about the contribution that design can make in enabling teams to work effectively. Individuals, or even individual disciplines, are not enough to tackle the really big challenges that we face in the twenty-first century: the grand challenges require interdisciplinary teams. But design has never recognised discipline silos, and designers and design researchers have always crossed boundaries, stepping in to bring teams together.’ Design researchers, furthermore, ‘live in the contemporary landscape, dealing with issues of the moment, and so they already have many of the methodologies for dealing with those issues.’

Secondly, says Tom Inns, designers in a business setting can help organisations to think divergently, to challenge orthodoxies, and so create a culture of innovation. ‘One of the things coming out of the programme is the fact that design researchers can play a pivotal role, in helping teams to think creatively. There’s lots of interest in sandpits [multidisciplinary workshops, set up to stimulate lateral thinking] at the moment, in different organisations, and these are often facilitated by designers.’

Finally, for Tom Inns, Designing for the 21st Century, and the other initiatives like it, constitute a big step up in terms of using arts and humanities research. ‘For my money, the strategic programmes represent the coming of age of the AHRC, as the human Research Council. There’s a Research Council for medicine, and another for economics – the AHRC represents the human dimension in life. It’s about culture, how we see things, how we work together – all the complex aspects of being human. Considering the human dimension adds quality and value to all the rest of what we do.’
A window to the past

An AHRC project has recreated a remarkable history of crime and punishment across nearly 250 years of British history, giving rise to a wealth of further research and spawning award-winning TV and radio programmes.

For centuries, the Old Bailey in London was the most important criminal court in the English-speaking world. But the trial records it produced are so numerous that reading the physical versions would in effect be a life sentence. What was needed was some way of making the records searchable, and available beyond the dusty vaults where they’re locked up.

Since 2003, the Old Bailey Online project has turned reports from nearly 200,000 Old Bailey trials, which took place between the 1670s and 1913, into a formidable digital resource. In doing so it has made fully searchable the lives of ordinary people.

The project has been led by Tim Hitchcock, Professor of Digital History at the University of Sussex and Robert Shoemaker, Professor of Eighteenth-Century History at the University of Sheffield. As Hitchcock says, ‘the archive has had an astonishing range of uses.’ Many people, of course, visit the Old Bailey Online site (www.oldbaileyonline.org) for their own personal reasons, seeing if they have any felons among their forebears. Then on the academic side, there are projects like Old Bailey Corpus: ‘because many of the court records contain verbatim accounts of witnesses and the accused, taken down using an early form of shorthand called brachygraphy, we have a huge body of recorded speech [in total, the Old Bailey records contain some 127 million words]. We can look at the changing nature of language, on a scale of analysis that hasn’t been possible before.’

Something that we can see, for example, is just how ubiquitous the language of violence is in eighteenth-century accounts – descriptions of assaults crop up in all kinds of cases. That declines as we go into the nineteenth century, seeming to reflect the transition to a less brutal society.

A gift to the nation

For the media, too, the Old Bailey Online has been a goldmine. It gave rise to the BBC’s award-winning TV series Garrow’s Law, which is based on real-life barrister William Garrow, who practised in the late 1700s. Mark Pallis, who was a writer on the programme (and is a former barrister himself), says: ‘the Old Bailey records were absolutely fundamental to the show’s success. You couldn’t go through them without seeing Garrow’s name cropping up again and again, often defending the underdog.’

For Mark Pallis, the Old Bailey Online project is ‘something of fundamental importance, which has added to the UK’s cultural heritage. For the first time, you get to hear the actual voices of ordinary people, in the syntax of the time, giving a sense of their real-life problems. It’s a window into the eighteenth century world, providing the tiny details that make up the real richness of London life at the time. It’s a fantastic thing, the work that the team did: they’ve given a gift to the nation.’

Then there’s the BBC radio show Voices from the Old Bailey, which uses dramatisations of court cases to explore aspects of eighteenth-century social history – everything from smuggling to rioting and cross-dressing. As historian Amanda Vickery says in the programme, in the Old Bailey accounts we have ‘the great theatre of humanity, with victims, witnesses and the accused all telling their sorry tales, and so revealing the very stuff of life. It’s the closest thing we have to a tape-recording of the past.’

The producer on the series was Elizabeth Burke, of Loftus Media. ‘We saw the potential of the Old Bailey Online archive almost immediately,’ she says. ‘As verbatim accounts, you can just lift them off the page and give them to actors. You hear the chatter of the streets, the authentic voices of ordinary people who otherwise have left no trace, as many were illiterate.’

Elizabeth Burke’s personal favourites are the little fragments of evidence from children, in which their characters comes across forcefully in just a few words. ‘There’s one little girl who is interviewed to see whether she is a reliable witness or not. She’s asked whether she “knows her catechism” and angrily replies – “no!”’

Voices from the Old Bailey has had a huge audience for a radio programme, and the series was in the top five in terms of audience appreciation on Radio Four. ‘And we know that tens of thousands of listeners followed up on their interest – we referred them to the Old Bailey Online website to find out more, and we know that they did that, often searching under their own family names.’

Setting the standard

Perhaps surprisingly, the Old Bailey Online archive has also been put to a number of public policy uses. Eighteenth-century cases have been cited in the US Supreme Court, for example, as evidence of how the law was practised before the US Constitution was written.

Then there’s the AHRC-funded Digital Panopticon project (see page 96), which has
“The Old Bailey records were absolutely fundamental to the show’s success”

Top: ‘Smugglerius’, thought to be a smuggler who was hanged at Tyburn, then cast as art in 1776

Left: Andrew Buchan as William Garrow in the award-winning series Garrow’s Law which ran from 2009 – 2011

Above: Classic Rowlandson scene of a trial
involved a collaboration between historians in the UK and in Australia, and has drawn together more than thirty large datasets (including the Old Bailey records), relating to some 90,000 convicts. By matching all this information up, Digital Panopticon lets us see not just who convicts were, and not just what happened to them after they were caught and sentenced, or even what happened after their punishments came to an end: whether or not they found themselves back committing crime. Now we can even look at the fortunes of their descendants, and see the long-term effects of what happened to them. And the material has been used to ask questions that are still relevant today, such as whether alternatives to imprisonment are more effective.

Bob Shoemaker, who is Professor of Eighteenth-Century British History at the University of Sheffield, co-director of both the original Old Bailey Online project, and the Digital Panopticon. ‘We didn’t specify how the archive would be used,’ he says. ‘Old Bailey Online shows that you don’t always know what benefits a big project will bring: you can’t exactly predict its effect. The AHRC expected us to think about what impact it might have, but it was ultimately prepared to take a punt.’

Finally, as Tim Hitchcock says, ‘the whole trend of digitising public records in this country has been boosted by Old Bailey Online: Britain is now the most digitised country in the world. What the AHRC has done is to create a series of exemplar projects, which set the standard for what can be done.’

For further information, please go to: www.oldbaileyonline.org
A decade in numbers

Since 2005

- **50** AHRC supported disciplines
- **24%** of active research staff in all disciplines are arts and humanities researchers
- **13,424** grant applications
- **45.7%** of our current research is collaborative
- **67%** of active grants are multi- or inter-disciplinary
- **2.8%** of the research budget goes to the arts and humanities
- **158** awards made to higher education institutions and IROS

Training Grants

- **7,413** PhD students supported since 2005
- **£410,826,000** spent on research and training since 2005
- **18** current DTPs and CDTs which involve 75 HEIs and 156 non-academic partners (including 17 industry partners)
**Leveraged Funding**

- **833** grants worth £183,305,345 leveraged income £30m, a total of 16%

- £30m leveraged income from industry, charities and public sector organisations since 2005

- **£101,009,702** further funding leveraged from 434 grants whose value is £139,334,805, a return of 144%

- £1.1m leveraged total from current active portfolio which includes contributions from partner organisations from 23 countries and 67 unique organisations across 37 awards

- 71% REF panel D rated world leading or internationally excellent

- £35m further funding reported in Researchfish originated from international research funders on 88 grants. This represents 25% of the total further funding

- 6,901 awards made to researchers (including PI & Co-I)

- £583,920,160 amount awarded

- 4,021 grants awarded

- 1,619 number of partner organisations

- £1,872,723,131 amount applied for

- 61 countries, 366 unique organisations across 236 awards with a leveraged income of £6.1m since 2005
Joining the dots

Richard Clay, who is Professor of Digital Humanities at the University of Newcastle, is the AHRC Commons Fellow – it’s his job to help arts and humanities researchers work together more effectively. We spoke to him about the value of collaborative research, and how some arts organisations are having their minds blown by what technology can do.

You and the AHRC go back a long way...

That’s right: my career pretty much coincides with the AHRC. From my PhD at UCL, which was supported by what was then the AHRB, through to my work now as the AHRC Commons Fellow – the AHRC has always been there, as far as I’m concerned.

And collaborative research has been a consistent theme?

Yes, it’s been a bit of a journey, and one that has been totally changed by the AHRC’s opening-up of the collaboration agenda.

Any examples?

Something I’m very proud of is the Suburban Birmingham project, which I was the Principal Investigator on when I was based at University of Birmingham, and which was supported by the AHRC. It was collaborative in a new way: it involved buying in the services of a curator from Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, and archivists and librarians from the Library of Birmingham and the Cadbury Research Library. They were working together with academics from the University of Birmingham, but they weren’t just there to help the academics – the project involved research being done by the heritage professionals themselves.

We were responding to expressions of interest from ordinary Brummies, who wanted to know more, not just about the important men and women and the big buildings of our city, but about where they themselves grew up, where they lived and worked. Our project on the development of Birmingham’s suburbs really fired people’s imaginations. It drew on the city’s overall cultural and heritage assets, making the most of a wide pool of knowledge and expertise.

And it showed the power of partnerships: there’s all the knowledge that sits in the professions that we academics can use, and there’s a growing recognition within the professions that they can tap into academic expertise. The project shaped the redesign of the museum’s Birmingham History Galleries and produced a great website that gets hits from all over the world.

And Suburban Birmingham has led to a follow-on project, hasn’t it?

Yes it did. My interest in collaborative research led to me becoming the Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Digital Humanities Hub at the University of Birmingham. Although I’ve now joined Newcastle, the Hub continues to focus in particular on the use of digital technologies in museums, galleries, libraries and archives. The Hub’s first project involved developing new software that took hundreds of texts and images from the Suburban Birmingham website and presented them on large multi-touch, multi-user screens that are like massive iPads. The software still features in partner organisations’ display spaces and users can browse information together – they can discuss it, argue about it, and play with all through intuitive gestures.’

Another project that I led at the Hub was Collaborative Arts Triple Helix (CATH), which was funded as part of the AHRC’s Creative Economy Knowledge Exchange programme. CATH helped to develop innovative digital prototypes, which could be used by organisations in the arts and heritage sector. It was all about collaboration: we worked with small tech companies, designers and cultural organisations. We had academics being asked questions they’d never normally get asked, SMEs understanding where the gaps are for arts and heritage organisations and how they might help to fill them, and arts and heritage organisations having their minds blown by what technology can do.

And now there’s the AHRC Commons. What’s that about?

The community of arts and humanities researchers in this country is the largest of all our disciplinary groups, with a great reputation internationally. The question is: could that community work more effectively, through greater dialogue and better interaction?

Through the AHRC Commons, we provide different ways for arts and humanities researchers to get together, alongside their peers in other organisations, to debate important questions, develop joint initiatives, co-ordinate their work, and build a shared case for the importance of arts and humanities research in national and international life.
So why is collaboration so important in Arts and Humanities research?

There’s a great quote that’s sometimes ascribed to George Bernard Shaw: ‘if you have an apple and I have an apple and we exchange those apples, then you and I will still each have one apple. But if you have an idea and I have an idea and we exchange those ideas, then each of us will have two ideas.’

A lot of arts and humanities research is done by small teams or individuals, but the very big research challenges that we face mean that we have to work in new ways. And the AHRC recognised that very early: they were very quick on the uptake, around the turn of the millennium, and in the run-up to them getting their Royal Charter. They were ahead of the impact agenda, understanding the benefits of working outside of the academy, as part of a broader research community.

And it’s been incredibly exciting, the blossoming of collaborative research nationally. In the US they’re just amazed at it, and we should be prouder of it. The AHRC’s early leadership was a big part of that – they were an early champion of cross-sector collaboration. It was visionary.

The AHRC Commons initiative requires a leap of imagination: believing that we can find ways for people from very different backgrounds to work together. But there’s huge value in reaching out to other organisations, and to the public, and exploring together our own culture, our place in history, and our sense of what it means to live now.

And finally, looking back over the last ten years, how do you think things have changed?

Ten years into the life of the AHRC, there are large groups of researchers working in this collaborative way: they’re the obvious early adopters. Some young researchers don’t know any different.

But that’s not the case with everyone, everywhere. With the AHRC Commons, we’ve got a cohort of champions of this way of working. We’re communicating the benefits of collaboration, and giving people a taste of its excitement and rewards.

The AHRC Commons is a great vision, more than ten years in the making. And there’s a growing body of evidence, over the lifetime of the AHRC, that collaborative research really works.

“...There are large groups of researchers working in this collaborative way... Some young researchers don’t know any different”
From firing ranges to samphire-gathering the Landscape and Environment programme

Almost as old as the AHRC itself, the Landscape and Environment programme looked to bring the arts and humanities to bear on understanding a topic that was previously the preserve of other disciplinary areas. Matt Shinn reports

The landscapes we live in, and the environment we depend upon, are areas of great public concern. But as well as being material realities, what we see around us is shaped by a complex mix of ideas and feelings, about beauty and belonging, about access to resources, about our relationship with nature. Landscape and the environment depend upon how we make sense of the world, and our place within it.

And none of this is new. The landscapes and environment that we have now are the result of long-standing cultural influences, resulting in complex patterns and structures.

The AHRC’s £5.5 million Landscape and Environment programme, which ran for five years from 2006, brought together researchers from a wide range of disciplines and approaches to look at the changing ways in which landscapes and environments have been imagined, experienced, designed, made and managed, and the implications of all this for the future.

The director of the programme was Stephen Daniels, Professor of Cultural Geography at the University of Nottingham. ‘My brief,’ he says, ‘was to get ideas of landscape and the environment firmly on the map of arts and humanities research.’ Where it had been seen as the preserve of such disciplines as geography and archaeology, the Landscape and Environment programme was based on the idea that the arts and humanities have a major role to play in understanding environmental change, through their focus on landscape, culture and imagination. ‘Subjects that you wouldn’t necessarily think had an environmental focus – history, law, even music – can all add to our ideas of what landscape and the environment are.’

Weird no more

Take for example Peter Coates, Professor of American and Environmental History at the University of Bristol, who brought his historian’s eye to a particular kind of landscape. The armed forces occupy some of the most beautiful, remote and environmentally valuable sites in the UK; the Militarised Landscapes project looked at the effects that this has had.

And some of the project’s findings were surprising: they showed, for example, that military lands are often reservoirs of biodiversity, ‘greener’ than surrounding areas with intensive farming and other forms of human encroachment. In many ways, says Peter Coates, the armed forces are a ‘responsible steward, with green policies that are advanced compared to those of other national military establishments.’

The project has led to the development of a number of audio walks, in partnership with the environmental support team at the MoD and the Royal Geographical Society,
MoD and the Royal Geographical Society, The project has led to the development of establishments. To those of other national military forms of human encroachment. In many areas with intensive farming and other biodiversity, ‘greener’ than surrounding military lands are often reservoirs of effects that this has had.

Militarised Landscapes project looked at the environmentally valuable sites in the UK; the some of the most beautiful, remote and human’s eye to a particular kind of American and Environmental History. Take for example Peter Coates, Professor of Landscape and Environment programme as part of the Impact Fellowship.

Weird no more law, even music – can all add to our ideas of landscape and the environment are. ‘Thinking about landscape is absolutely about inclusiveness, helping people to appreciate the Wall as part of their culture, and to see it as part of their lives now.’ In particular, the themes of the project have led to something of a culture change for us, making us think about what exactly is that we’re saving in a place like Mullion Cove – recognising that we’re protecting the spirit of the place, its distinctive character and its historical significance, but that this doesn’t mean preserving the physical environment absolutely unchanged.’

For Ben Cowell, the long-term effects of the National Trust’s involvement in the Landscape and Environment programme can be seen for example in its new ten-year plan, where landscape takes centre stage. ‘Thinking about landscape is absolutely what the National Trust is about, and what we do. When you’re thinking about “special places,” which is what we’re concerned with, you’re often talking about landscapes, both natural and man-made. But the Landscape and Environment programme has led to us reflecting deeply on what landscape means, in a cultural context. It is something that is not a-historical. We now consider the “cultural layer” to landscape, which can sometimes only be revealed using the methods of arts and humanities researchers, asking their questions.’

A book on Landscapes of the National Trust (Pavilion Press, October 2015), co-authored by Stephen Daniels, Ben Cowell and programme Research Fellow Lucy Veale, features these projects, illustrated with works by award winning photographer Simon Roberts.

Walls and bridges

Another Landscape and Environment project focused on Hadrian’s Wall. Tales of the Frontier looked at the historical context within which the Wall has been interpreted, publicised, visited and displayed. It revised the idea of a wall as a barrier, re-positioning it as a bridge across a wider cultural landscape, not just about keeping people out but about bringing them in, including the multi-cultural Roman army. As well as an exhibition, the project has involved other means of communicating with a wide public audience, including work with schools. As Stephen Daniels says, ‘it was about inclusiveness, helping people to appreciate the Wall as part of their culture, and to see it as part of their lives now.’ In particular, the themes of the project were used to explore issues of immigration and multiculturalism.
A whole new discipline

So, nearly a decade after the Landscape and Environment programme began, what is its lasting legacy?

For Stephen Daniels, the programme represented a significant forward investment: its effect is not just for a limited period, but long term. And this is an area where the AHRC has a continuing involvement, especially with Living with Environmental Change, which is an ongoing, ten-year research programme that brings academics together with businesses, government bodies, NGOs and the public, to understand the research challenges and social and economic implications of environmental change.

Academically, the Landscape and Environment programme has had a major effect. ‘A lot of the pressures of academic life turn disciplines inward,’ says Stephen Daniels. ‘But the AHRC in general, and the Landscape and Environment strategic programme in particular, have built a new research constituency across disciplinary frontiers.’

As well as the concrete outcomes of specific projects, in other words, the programme has brought about a refiguring of the research community, and shaped a whole new discipline: environmental humanities, which aims to place arts and humanities research questions squarely within environmental studies. As Peter Coates puts it: ‘at Bristol now we have a Lectureship in Environmental Humanities – that would have been inconceivable before. No-one would have heard of it.’

Other achievements include having arts and humanities researchers involved in the National Ecosystem Assessment, which reported in 2011, and which was the first full analysis of the UK’s natural environment in terms of the benefits it provides to society, and to the UK’s continuing economic prosperity.

Landscape and Environment has also involved building communities with the public: on the Contested Common Land project, for example, researchers worked with commoners themselves, as well as land managers, voluntary groups and the public agencies responsible for the governance of common land.

For Stephen Daniels, ‘that’s what we can do, as researchers – encouraging all kinds of people to re-imagine, to look again. That can involve putting things in a longer-term perspective: showing the wider context, the “long now.”’

Ultimately, for Stephen Daniels, ‘the Landscape and Environment programme shows how the AHRC works in microcosm. You can’t imagine it being supported by any other funding organisation: I frequently travel overseas, but there’s nothing like this programme beyond Britain, or like the AHRC. The programme has created an international platform, showing the kind of research that can be done. It’s a tough job to find the right balance, but the AHRC have always been adventurous, while at the same time standing up for academic excellence and demonstrating public value.’

For further information:
www.landscape.ac.uk
Blooming marvellous

The story goes that when the *Picasso: Peace and Freedom* exhibition was on tour at the Louisiana in Denmark, it overlapped with a David Hockney show in the same museum. But the curators could never get hold of Hockney when they needed him, to help with the installation of his work: day after day he was to be found, tucked away in a corner of the other exhibition, saying to himself ‘that Picasso’s blooming marvellous.’

Hockney wasn’t the only one to be impressed. In all, nearly three quarters of a million people saw *Picasso: Peace and Freedom*, which started at Tate Liverpool in 2009, and also visited Albertina Vienna. The show sought to re-establish Picasso as a radical and political artist, and campaigner for peace. And it was research, supported by the AHRC, which made it possible.

As Lynda Morris, who is Professor of Curation and Art History at Norwich University of the Arts, explains: ‘for a major revaluation of an artist like Picasso, you need to do your homework. It’s fair to say that this exhibition couldn’t have taken place without the research component, and without the AHRC.’

With the AHRC’s support, Lynda Morris, who has worked on Picasso since the late Seventies, was able to spend many weeks researching in archives, such as at the Musée Picasso, Paris and Alfred Barr’s archives in New York. And painstakingly, she was able to tie in Picasso’s art with the daily historical events which influenced it, helped in part by Picasso’s meticulous way of dating his work.

As Lynda Morris puts it, ‘through my research, we were able to tell the back-story of the paintings: who he was talking to, what newspapers he was reading, who he was corresponding with. Picasso was a subtle figure: he didn’t talk explicitly about his politics, but it’s all there in his work.’

Picasso’s masterpiece *The Charnel House* (see overleaf), for example, was shown to have been inspired by film of a Spanish Republican family, who were murdered in their kitchen.

For Lynda Morris, the point about the AHRC’s funding wasn’t just that it enabled groundbreaking research to be carried out, away from the commercial pressures that national museums are often constrained by. ‘In showing that Picasso was an artist who was very much politically engaged, we were going against the view of him that the big auction houses have been promoting for many years. Picasso wasn’t just this...’

We were able to tell the back-story of the paintings, who he was talking to, what newspapers he was reading’

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**Picasso: Peace and Freedom in facts and figures**

- **10** sculptures
- **70** drawings and prints
- **50** oil paintings
- **74%** of visitors to the show at Tate Liverpool were from outside the city
- **95,000** visitors to the exhibition
- **150** archival documents, photographs and posters
- **8%** of visitors to the show at Tate Liverpool were from overseas
- **£5 M** in direct spend to the local economy
Picasso: Peace and Freedom reveals a radically different figure to the one often presented in art historical accounts. In it we meet a politically and socially engaged artist, who joined the French Communist Party in October 1944 and remained a member until his death in 1973. Actively engaged in the Peace Movement, for which he was a prominent spokesperson, his work during this period chronicled human conflict and war but also expressed a deep desire for international understanding and equality.

After the Second World War, Picasso, already widely recognised as the world’s greatest living artist, emerged as a celebrated political figure and hero of left-wing causes. His ‘Dove of Peace’ became the international emblem of the Peace Movement and a symbol of hope during the Cold War period. He was a tireless campaigner for freedom and justice, contributing generously both to the Party and a range of humanitarian causes.

Rather than treating him as an isolated genius of modern art, this book considers Picasso as a ‘History Painter’ and follows the chronology of key works painted between 1944 and his death in 1973: Picasso’s habit of precisely dating his works means that each can be aligned with world events that were unfolding at the time, whether it is the Fascist victory and dictatorship in Spain, the Liberation of France, the Algerian War of Independence or the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Picasso’s political commitment and its implications for his work can be seen as one of the last undiscovered territories in the study of the artist. A wealth of new material and research makes a direct link between Picasso’s art and his politics. Alongside masterworks related to the themes of war and peace from the 1940s onwards, this richly illustrated book features posters, prints, drawings, ceramics and an extensive range of ephemera including contemporary letters, archival documents, period publications and newspapers.

Lynda Morris is Curator and AHRC Research Fellow at Norwich University College of the Arts.

Christoph Grunenberg is Director of Tate Liverpool.

Piotr Bernatowicz is an art historian, critic, and Lecturer at the Institute of Art History at Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan.

Pierre Daix is an author and journalist.

Vojtech Lahoda is Professor of Art History at Charles University, Prague, and Deputy Director of the Institute for Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague.

Annette Wieviorka is a historian and Director of Research at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris.

**Bottom left:** The Charnel House by Picasso, 1944-1945. Lynda Morris showed that this painting was inspired by a film of a Spanish Republican family who were murdered in their kitchen.

**Bottom right:** The catalogue for the Picasso: Peace and Freedom exhibition at Tate Liverpool in 2009.
godlike artistic genius: he was very much engaged with the modern history he was living in. My proudest memory is of ordinary families in Liverpool, including grandparents, visiting the exhibition with their children and grandchildren, and intensely discussing the memories that it evoked for them. Picasso's works are from a period which is still just within memory.'

Something different

For Lindsey Fryer, who is Head of Learning at Tate Liverpool, having an exhibition that was truly research-led was a rare opportunity. 'Every summer we have a major show,’ she says, ‘aiming to say something different about a modern master: we try to tell a story that has not been told before, in depth, and with strong research. In the case of Picasso: Peace and Freedom, we were able to go further, with deeper and more extensive research: Lynda’s passion, experience and knowledge of the field are well-known: this show wouldn’t have been possible if we hadn’t had such an expert, who was able to go through such a vast amount of archival material. Our job then was to work collaboratively with her – we know the building and we know our audience, and we were able to hone the material down, for them.'

The success of the exhibition was indisputable: ‘we had over 95,000 visitors – that’s the second highest number that we’ve ever had. And we know that many of those people weren’t regular gallery-goers: we were reaching a new audience. We even gave out 10,000 teachers’ packs – normally we’re lucky if we get asked for 1,000.

And as Picasso was revealed as an artist who was deeply politically and socially engaged, there were a few surprises in store. ‘I had no idea,’ says Lindsey Fryer, ‘that Picasso was such a strong supporter of women’s rights, for example, given what we know about his personal life. But through the show we had the chance to see the whole man, in all his depth and complexity.’

Pure luxury

For Christoph Grunenberg, who was Director of Tate Liverpool at the time of the exhibition, it was also the research that made the artworks come alive. ‘Picasso is a painter who’s been hugely researched, and it’s difficult to come up with anything new,’ he says. ‘The difference with this show was the long period of preparation that it was able to have – that was a pure luxury for us. This was exactly the kind of intense, sustained research that’s often missing, especially nowadays, with the demands of a constant cycle of exhibitions.’

Working with Lynda Morris as an outside researcher, says Christoph Grunenberg, was ‘a fantastic opportunity. This exhibition relied upon systematic digging in the archives – drawing out the connections, say, between Picasso’s Women of Algiers [one of the series recently became the most expensive painting in the world] and the war that was happening in Algeria at the time that it was painted. That’s only possible through sustained research.’

‘Through his donations of money and artworks, Lynda has been able to show what a huge range of causes Picasso supported – from Civil Rights in the US, to independence movements in Africa. This often contradicts the image of himself that he cultivated – that of the unreflective, creative genius producing works on a conveyor belt. We argued convincingly, I think, that Picasso was often working quietly, behind the scenes, to support the causes he cared about.’
Home comforts

An extraordinary story of philanthropy and humanity is being uncovered by one of the AHRC Engagement Centres in partnership with the YMCA. Matt Shinn reports
The average Joe probably just thinks of the song by the Village People,’ says Michael Snape, Reader in Religion, War and Society at the University of Birmingham. Few of us now would associate the YMCA with the First World War, or know that the organisation was involved at the time in one of the greatest philanthropic endeavours ever undertaken in British society.

The support that the YMCA gave to soldiers in the Great War was material, educational and spiritual. It covered everything from providing recreational huts and tents when young men began their training, to supplying pastoral care, writing materials and cups of tea at hundreds of centres, many very close to (and sometimes on) the front line (the YMCA centre at Ypres, for example, was in a dug-out that frequently came under shell fire). The YMCA was one of several organisations that gave soldiers a small reminder of the civilian world, even in a front-line trench.

Then there was what Michael Snape calls the ‘amazingly touching’ service that the YMCA provided, of taking family members to hospitals in France, to say farewell to soldiers who were dying and who could not be brought back. ‘I had a great uncle who was fatally wounded at Messines,’ he says. ‘My great-grandfather received the news, and was asked to travel to be with him in his last hours. I puzzled over that for years – how was it possible for a working-class man to get over to France in 1917? The answer was that the YMCA had made it possible.’

**Elbow room**

The YMCA’s work in the Great War was a huge logistical undertaking. And given its range, cost, and the number of people involved, says Michael Snape, ‘the fact that it’s now so little known shows just how much of the legacy of the First World War has been forgotten.’

The project that is bringing this forgotten history to light has been supported by the Voices of War and Peace Engagement Centre, based at the University of Birmingham but involving other universities and a wide range of organisations (see inset box). Like other projects supported by the Engagement Centre, it shows how much the role of religion in society has changed in a hundred years, and how important the work of faith-based agencies was at the time of the First World War.

The YMCA’s work in the conflict was entirely independent of government: it was carried out by volunteers, and supported by donations totalling £2.5 million over the course of the war – a huge amount at the time. ‘The latitude the YMCA was given shows how much Britain was a liberal Christian society, and the care that it took of its soldiers,’ says Michael Snape. ‘It’s in marked contrast to some of the black legends of the Great War, with their clichés of every 16-year-old being tied to a stake and shot for cowardice. The elbow room given to philanthropic organisations shows the real attitude of the army and of the state, and the extent to which British soldiers were looked after. The French and the Germans didn’t have anything like it.’

There is a fundamental contrast, in other words, between the work of the YMCA in the trenches, and the image of the army as a callous machine. ‘I’m not trying to bang the drum for the generals, but key figures in the military top brass, including Field Marshal Haig, were important in promoting the YMCA’s work: Haig’s wife even worked for the YMCA in London.’

It was natural that Voices of War and Peace should be involved in this project: the YMCA’s main archive is in the Cadbury Research Library at Birmingham University. As Michael Snape says, it is an ‘absolutely astonishing treasure trove of photographs and manuscripts. And this is a very important story to tell. But one of the problems has been that the YMCA is an activist

The World War One Engagement Centres

There are five First World War Engagement Centres in the UK, funded by the AHRC in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund. Each Engagement Centre involves networks of academic researchers collaborating with projects locally and nationally and providing advice and support to community groups commemorating the centenary of the Great War.

‘What we are is a helping hand,’ says Mark Connelly, Director of the Gateways Engagement Centre, ‘for community groups who are interested in marking the centenary, and need guidance on the way to go. We’re not about telling people what to do. We’re like traffic cops, directing people towards the research skills or insight they might need. We can put all that at their disposal.’

The Centres are funded through the Connected Communities programme and the AHRC’s Care for the Future theme (see overleaf).

Images: The support that the YMCA gave to soldiers in the Great War was material, educational and spiritual. It covered everything from providing recreational huts and tents when young men began their training, to supplying pastoral care, writing material, cups of tea, very close to the front line. Images courtesy of Cadbury Research Library: Special Collections, University of Birmingham.
organisation: it tends to be busy with what it’s doing in the present, rather than thinking about the past.’

The YMCA Goes to War project has involved running day schools, to teach people who are interested in the conflict about this neglected aspect of it. It also involves encouraging local YMCA branches to work with the organisation’s archives, and make use of them. Bradford YMCA, for example, has created a display to catch the attention of passers-by, and show them something of the work that the YMCA did during the Great War – a deliberate echo of the kinds of awareness-raising that the YMCA went in for during the conflict, including the creation of mock dug-outs, to demonstrate the conditions that the soldiers were fighting in. ‘We’re telling YMCA people themselves about their history,’ says Michael Snape, ‘and enabling them to engage with the public in a very direct way, taking stuff out onto the streets.’

An international effort

The YMCA’s Head of International Affairs is Ken Montgomery. He points out that many of the YMCA’s volunteers in the First World War were women, who often came to understand much more of the reality of the conflict than those who stayed at home. ‘Many, indeed, found themselves in harm’s way: Betty Stephenson, for example, volunteered at the age of 18, and was given the job of taking relatives to visit the men who were too seriously wounded to be transported back to Britain. She was killed in France in an air raid, at the age of 21.’

And the YMCA’s work was an international effort: volunteers came from Canada, India, the US and Australia, as well as Britain. US President Woodrow Wilson said that 90% of pastoral services provided to the American troops during the First World War were provided by the YMCA. The government of South Africa also paid tribute, donating 400 acres on the shores of Lake Windermere, which the YMCA still uses as an outdoor activities centre.

‘The YMCA provided services to friend and foe alike,’ says Ken Montgomery. ‘It was ecumenical, and it didn’t proselytise. It was very much about providing practical support, and not just praying. With the professionalisation of services, and the expansion in what the State provides, you probably wouldn’t get anything like it today.’
Playing to a different tune

‘It’s one of the greatest rags-to-riches stories never told,’ says Nick Baragwanath, ‘enabling poor kids to make good’

Supported by an AHRC Research Leadership Fellowship, Nick Baragwanath’s project ‘Haydn, Solfeggio, and the Art of Melody’ is helping to uncover the forgotten story of the way that music was learnt by some of the greatest composers. And in doing so, it is showing that classical music in the eighteenth century, far from being the preserve of the rich, was ‘a wonderful engine of social change, enabling poor kids to make good.’ Composers like Haydn and Salieri rose from utter destitution (Haydn’s family were so poor that they had to give him away, in effect, at the age of six). Music was performed by poor people: conservatoires were originally orphanages. And above all it was Naples, with its abundance of foundlings and orphans, that turned poor children into great musicians: there was plenty of demand for them (especially from the church), and music was a trade that orphans could be taught cheaply. The conservatoires functioned, in Nick Baragwanath’s words, as ‘music boot camps,’ where the orphans woke at dawn and worked all day on music, so that they could then be hired out as players.

The language of music

And it’s the way that these young musicians learnt their craft which is proving to be particularly interesting. Not for them the dull, modern method of following notes on a score: what Nick Baragwanath’s project is showing is that the solfeggio, or study in melody, which was central to the training of young musicians, was much more like what modern jazz musicians do. You would learn to improvise around a musical structure, playing with harmonies until you almost began to speak music as language. It was not uncommon for children to be able to improvise whole pieces, even fugues. And this was learning in a very tactile way, through hand positions on a keyboard, for example. These were the tricks of the trade, the craft secrets of performers, which they didn’t want to be widely known (and so would generally avoid writing about): hence the fact that much of this history is only now starting to emerge.

Himself a concert pianist before becoming an academic, Nick Baragwanath’s interest in this area began when he was searching for a creative and fun way to teach his then three-year-old son Isaac, and give him an understanding of the building blocks of music. ‘I wanted him to have the joy of music, without the struggle. Classical music seemed forbidding and closed, while modern music teaching methods were lacking in creativity. They were all based on repetitions of someone else’s music, like an act of homage to the great composers of the past.’

Nick Baragwanath has now taught many children in the eighteenth century way, showing that ‘composition isn’t a mystery or a divinely bestowed gift: it’s a craft.’ When you know what you’re listening for, you can hear the patterns of classic children’s exercises in everything from La Bohème to Elvis and the Star Wars theme.

There are implications in this for stimulating creativity more generally. ‘We learn too much through reading and talking,’ says Nick Baragwanath, ‘and not enough through playing.’ And there’s scope to learn from other kinds of apprenticeships, in other areas: ‘always there’s the same emphasis on oral teaching (you don’t put your craft secrets on paper), and on learning through practical, simple tasks.’

Nick Baragwanath’s aim is to get this history more widely known (he’s already had a Radio 3 programme, talking about his project), to help transform music education, and to start to ‘crack open the elitism’ that exists around classical music. ‘Music is music – Bach isn’t fundamentally different from the Beatles. And with music being such a huge industry in the UK, and a massive part of our shared history, the more our kids fundamentally understand it, the better.’
Portus was the maritime port of Imperial Rome, and for c. 500 years was the commercial hub that connected the Metropolis to the broader Mediterranean. It was a very large complex covering c. 3.5 km² and which encompassed c. 230.5 Ha of harbour basins and quays, as well as canals, warehouses, temples, churches, houses and administrative buildings.

Since it is also one of the best preserved Roman Mediterranean port sites and now lies inland, it can be readily studied to learn about how it was organised and worked, the richness and volume of traffic and cargoes that passed through it, and the range of its contacts across the Mediterranean. It also presents us with considerable challenges, however, not least in terms of the very large scale of the complex and its buildings, but also in the sheer volume of the finds.

Our recent research at the site consists of two interrelated AHRC-funded initiatives, the Portus Project (2007-2011) and the Portus in the Roman Mediterranean Project (2011-2014). Both of these have involved the University of Southampton, the British School at Rome, the Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma and the University of Cambridge, as well as a range of other partners in the UK and Europe. We have adopted an inter-disciplinary approach to the study of Portus, with techniques ranging from field archaeology to computing, the physical anthropology and biological profiling of human skeletons, geo-archaeology and environmental analysis. The training of students in many of these and other techniques has been a key feature of the projects.

Learn more about the project at: www.portusproject.org
1. A computer graphic interpretation of the likely appearance of the buildings excavated at Portus by the Portus Project (2007-2011)
2. Graphic model (Grant Cox/Portus Project)
3. Excavated skeletons of 6th century date found close to the quay on the south side of the Claudian basin (Portus Project)
4. Head of Ulysses or a mariner from the Palazzo imperial at Portus head (Simon Keay/Portus Project)
5. Brick stamp (James Miles/Portus Project)
6. RTI specular enhancement view of stamp
7. Amphora used to transport fish sauce from southern Spain to Rome (Penny Copeland/Portus Project)
8. Remains of the river port of Rome which has been scanned as part of a collaboration with the Archaeological Superintendancy for Rome (Simon Keay/Portus Project)
9. Geo-archaeologists drilling a deep core in order to sample harbour deposits at Portus (Simon Keay/Portus Project)
10. Structural simulation of Building 5 (James Miles/Portus Project)
Selecting the best

Central to the AHRC’s work has been the Peer Review College. Established in 2004, it ensures the AHRC funds only the best proposals it receives.

For over a decade now, the AHRC’s Peer Review College has helped to ensure that the best research proposals are those that receive funding. We talked to three of the PRC’s longest-serving members about the work of the College, and its effect on arts and humanities research in the UK.

How are we to ensure that public funding goes to the best research projects?

Like other Research Councils, the AHRC makes use of a process of peer review, in which research proposals are evaluated by experts. And central to the AHRC’s peer review process is its Peer Review College (PRC). Instead of an ad hoc arrangement, with reviewers called upon sporadically, a College means having a standing body of subject specialists, who can provide regular reviews in their areas of expertise, who are trained in the peer review process, and who understand the AHRC’s aims and priorities.

Since its creation in 2004, members of the PRC have provided expert reviews of grant proposals, which ultimately inform the AHRC’s decisions about what gets funded. These days, there are about 1,500 PRC members, drawn from higher education institutions and other organisations in the UK and overseas, and covering the full range of arts and humanities research areas.

Opening up

For Maggie B. Gale, who is Professor of Drama at the University of Manchester and a long-standing PRC member, the creation of the College has introduced a fairer, more systematic and more open process through which research applications are assessed. The PRC, she says, is ‘a body of academics who are qualified to give genuinely objective assessments of research applications, within the framework established by the AHRC.’

And for her, one of the changes that the PRC has brought about is in the area of communication. ‘There have been times in the past when academics haven’t necessarily felt the need to articulate their research clearly to outsiders. The PRC has been part of the system that has formalised the need to talk about research, and has encouraged a traditionally inward-facing profession to become more productively engaged with those who are not part of it.’

It’s impossible to look at the effect of the PRC in isolation, suggests Maggie B. Gale. ‘The PRC services the AHRC, so when grant frameworks change, the applications that we receive also change.’ The PRC plays a mediating role, in effect, speaking to the AHRC, but also feeding back to academic institutions.

“ It would be good for people to get a sense of the breadth of the research that the AHRC funds”
It would be good if, through the AHRC’s anniversary, more people could be made aware of the excellent work that it does, underpinned by the PRC.”

The influence of the PRC has, then, been positive, says Gale. “Since the PRC was created, I’ve seen the quality of applications improve. Researchers have learnt how to put proposals together that are more complex and ambitious, and they’ve become better equipped in breaking down the parts of the research process.’

For Gale, ‘where a project is innovative, clearly conceptualised, clearly articulated, and realistic in terms of its projected outcomes and dissemination – when an applicant can say “there’s a gap in this area, this is our proposed methodology, this is a breakdown of our proposed management, and these are our expected outcomes” – it’s rare that it doesn’t get funded. I find that refreshing and rather hopeful.’

Towards professional project planning
Another PRC veteran is John Feather, Emeritus Professor of Library and Information Studies in the Schools of Arts, English and Drama at Loughborough University. For him too, the creation of the PRC has led to research projects becoming bigger and more ambitious. ‘Apart from in archaeology and linguistics, most scholars in the humanities hadn’t been used to managing large projects. The lone scholar was a myth, but most had been used to devising and writing up their research themselves. The culture of having research assistants, for example, was relatively unfamiliar to many. But the PRC has helped to change that.’

With the creation of the PRC, the review process has also become more systematic, with judgments being made against more clearly defined criteria – ‘that’s important, given that competition for funding has become much fiercer’ For John Feather, the PRC’s requirement to provide feedback has matched the shift in a number of public bodies, in becoming more accountable to stakeholders. And in terms of its influence, there are links to the development of the Research Assessment Exercise and Research Excellence Framework: ‘it’s quite clear now that considerations of how research will be published aren’t just an afterthought. Humanities scholars are much more professional now in their mode of operation. There’s greater division of labour. There’s proper project planning, and a greater sense of urgency. But there’s also a greater consideration of what the project’s output will be, at least in terms of what form it will take. This, too, has been something that the PRC has encouraged.’

And has all this led to better research? ‘In terms of quality, at least it doesn’t follow that proper project planning has had a negative impact. It’s easy to mythologise the old days, but we should remember that when scholars spent twenty years writing books, not all of them were great.’

For John Feather, ‘it would be good if, through the AHRC’s anniversary, more people could be made aware of the excellent work that it does, underpinned by the PRC. And it gives us an opportunity to speak up for the broader socio-economic value of arts and humanities research, and to make the convincing case for its continued public support.’

Impact and quality
Tony Brown, who is Professor of Geography at the University of Southampton, has long been involved in the process of training new review panel members, which is an important function that the PRC performs. For him, ‘higher education institutions contribute to the work of the PRC, in effect, through the time that their academics devote to it. That, after all, is part of the idea of a College: PRC members get to build up their experience and expertise in peer review over a period of time, and this gives them a sense of the comparative quality of research proposals, which is essential to the work of assessment panels.’ But at the same time, ‘the academics get something out of it, too, including a better understanding of what makes for a proposal that is likely to win funding.’

As Tony Brown points out, though, ‘funding top-quality arts and humanities research isn’t necessarily the same as funding research that has impact. One of the things that we emphasise in our [University of Southampton] training is the need to avoid any bias towards those subject areas where impact is easier to demonstrate, or towards those institutions which by their nature are more geared-up for dealing with the public. We encourage reviewers to concentrate on identifying research that in itself is innovative and high quality. We also encourage review panel members not to be too conservative in their approach, and not to hedge their bets – it’s better for an unsuccessful applicant to hear that their proposal was flawed, and to be given the reasons why, than to be given bland feedback.’

Finally, for Tony Brown too, the AHRC’s anniversary presents an opportunity: ‘it would be good for people to get a sense of the breadth of the research that the AHRC funds, and to understand that top-quality research is of value in many different ways.”
The faces of the dead

An extraordinary online archive has documented the tragedies of the Troubles in Northern Ireland but in doing so has provided a symbol of hope and reconciliation, writes Matt Shinn.

What we call the Troubles weren’t the first in Northern Ireland,’ says Dr Martin Melaugh, Director of the CAIN project at Ulster University. ‘There was another period of Troubles, in the Twenties, when around five hundred people were killed in Belfast. But by the late Sixties, a lot of young people weren’t fully aware of the earlier conflict, and how sectarian and vicious it had been. There were many similarities with the most recent conflict – it took place in the same areas of the city, it involved organisations with similar aims and tactics, it impacted most heavily on similar sections of society.’

‘The question is, if people had known more about the history of the earlier conflict, if they had access to information and photographs of the five hundred people killed, would they have rushed headlong into the Troubles in the Sixties?’

Remembering the victims

CAIN (the Conflict Archive on the INternet) is a source of information on the Northern Ireland Troubles, from 1968 to the present day. It has been developed by Incore (the International Conflict Resolution Institute), which researches the causes and consequences of violent conflict in Northern Ireland and around the world, and promotes strategies for conflict resolution. And with AHRC support, the team behind CAIN undertook a two-year project, culminating in an online archive of materials relating to the victims of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and the ways that they are remembered.

Some 3,500 people died during the conflict. But before the CAIN project, there had been no online impartial source of information about who those people were. ‘We were keen to compile details of all the people who had been killed,’ says Martin Melaugh. ‘The official police statistics on the dead, held by the RUC, did not list people killed in the Republic of Ireland, England or Europe. In looking for more complete information we found resources that had been compiled by people from ordinary backgrounds who were not academics or part of official agencies.’

Faces to names

Launched in 2009, the online archive brings together material from many different sources, and from all sides of the conflict: by digitising it and putting it online, that material has now been preserved, and made available outside Northern Ireland. And it contains much more than just the bare
The lessons of the last fifty years need to be retained, made accessible, and used. We hope the CAIN resources can play a part.”

Conflict Textiles collection

Among the activities that have been supported through the CAIN project there have been a series of exhibitions and associated activities that give an account of textile artworks depicting conflicts in different parts of the world. The core collection’s provenance is from the bloodshed in Chile in the 1970/1980s and Northern Ireland.

‘The Art of Survival: International and Irish Quilts’ in 2008 was the first exhibition of this kind that took place in nine venues in Derry/Londonderry. It was organized by the then Derry City Council Heritage and Museum Services. As of August 2015 the CAIN database has archived 131 exhibitions and events. The exhibitions have been curated by Roberta Bacic, who herself comes from Chile; they demonstrate how makers of quilts and similar textiles (mainly Chilean arpilleras) have been used to document people’s experiences of conflict around the world, and to share stories about it.

A glass obelisk which forms part of the Omagh Bomb Memorial, on Market Street, Omagh, Northern Ireland

Arpilleras made during the Chilean dictatorship are hand-stitched pictures made from scraps of material, often taken directly from the clothes of people who were killed or who had disappeared. As Roberta Bacic says, ‘they document the way that conflict has affected ordinary lives and communities. I wanted to make possible an open conversation, especially about what women have to say about conflict.’

The exhibitions have been shown in other countries with a history of conflict, where that conflict has been difficult to talk about – in Spain, for example. ‘This is a way of getting people to open up by finding a different language to express people’s experiences, we’ve started to trigger a profound and intense discussion.’

The physical collection has recently been donated to Derry City and Strabane District Council. CAIN continues to add to the digital information on the exhibitions and also information on over 200 textiles. A new website will be launched on 19th November 2015.

Set in stone

Another aspect of the project has been the development of a searchable database of information on, and photographs of, the physical monuments to the victims of the conflict. ‘The physical memorials,’ says Martin Melaugh, ‘together with murals and a few fortified police stations, are some of the last remaining visible reminders of the Troubles. Our work has included mapping the location of those memorials situated in public spaces.’

Never again?

The CAIN site has generated interest around the world. It has been used in comparative analyses on the legacy of conflict in Northern Ireland, the Middle East and South Africa, for example.

And what of its impact in Northern Ireland?

‘We did not promote the project as conflict resolution,’ says Martin Melaugh, ‘but we believe the resources will aid others who work directly in this field. We have compiled materials produced by a wide range of groups and individuals, we have ourselves generated new information to help fill some of the gaps, and we have preserved all the resources for the future.’

‘What worries me is that we’re not completely out of the woods. The modernity of the Sixties led some people to believe that the earlier Troubles would not be repeated. They were proved wrong. The lessons of the last fifty years need to be retained, made accessible, and used. We hope the CAIN resources can play a part in that process.’

Information on victims can be found at: cain.ulster.ac.uk/victims

‘It is the victims’ families who have been the key beneficiaries of this project’
On the shoulders of giants

Should more of us have heard of Robert Grosseteste, the thirteenth-century British theologian who many see as a pioneer of modern science?

Grosseteste (perhaps appropriately, the name means ‘big head’) made original contributions to pretty much everything he turned his hand to, from the liberal arts to philosophy and the natural sciences. Literary specialists are interested in him, because of his extraordinarily rich and allusive style of writing. But it is his work on the physics of light and on cosmology – which includes the first known suggestion that the visible universe is expanding from a fixed point (what we call the Big Bang theory) – which is really bringing him to modern attention.

Funded by an AHRC International Network grant and subsequently as a Research Grant through the Science in Culture theme (see box opposite) and based at Durham University, the Grosseteste Project brings together scholars from all over the world, to re-translate and re-examine the works of this one-time Bishop of Lincoln.

Dr Giles Gasper, who is associate director of Durham’s Institute of Medieval and Early Modern Studies, explains the group’s methods: ‘Grosseteste’s texts are read, commented on and edited both by medieval specialists and by modern scientists, with the result that our new translations are historically and linguistically, but also scientifically rigorous.’ The aim eventually is to work through the whole corpus of Grosseteste’s writings, replacing the standard translations that are now over a century old. And already, the effect has been dramatic. As Giles Gasper puts it, ‘mistsakes in the old translations had meant that the texts didn’t make sense scientifically, making them appear pretty crackers. The cleaned-up translations have led us to have much greater respect for Grosseteste’s work, and for medieval science as a whole.’

Indeed, Grosseteste was among the first western thinkers to argue that natural phenomena could be described mathematically, and there are hints in his work of an experimental approach, with him using direct observation to challenge his sources. It is this that has led Grosseteste to be hailed as the founder of the British scientific tradition, and the precursor of figures such as Roger Bacon, who is thought to have been one of Grosseteste’s students at Oxford. Giles Gasper explains that the Ordered Universe project, which is run by members of Durham’s Institute of Computational Cosmology, has been looking at the scientific credibility of Grosseteste’s ideas, and ‘they’ve been astonished at how logical they’re finding his conclusions, given the cultural parameters he was working within.’

One of the keys to Grosseteste’s astonishing breaks with medieval orthodoxy was his rediscovery of the works of Aristotle (especially the Physics), translated from the Arabic, and accompanied by Arabic commentaries. But also ‘he’s very modern in
personality probably didn’t help in getting his work noticed. But then, Grosseteste’s sometimes abrasive personality probably didn’t help in getting his work noticed. The next writer to suggest the idea was Edgar Allan Poe, in the nineteenth century. Yet Grosseteste’s work was largely overlooked during his lifetime, and long afterwards. His remarkably succinct treatise De Luce, ‘On Light,’ sets out for the first time the idea that the universe has changed through time, expanding from a central point – 700 years before modern descriptions of the Big Bang from the likes of Georges Lemaître and Edwin Hubble. And yet no-one took it up – the next writer to suggest the idea was Edgar Allan Poe, in the nineteenth century.

But then, Grosseteste’s sometimes abrasive personality probably didn’t help in getting his ideas circulated. According to Giles Caspers, ‘his letters show him to have been pretty fierce. He was a passionate figure, who got legendarily cross with the Pope. He told the papal curia that he was corrupt – it’s probably the reason why he’s not a saint.’ As a physicist, Professor Tom McLeish, who is also pro-vice-chancellor (research) at Durham, comes at Grosseteste from a different direction. It was he who instigated the project, having heard about Grosseteste during lunchtime lectures at Leeds. ‘Most people probably don’t appreciate how astonishing this guy’s work is,’ he says. Tom McLeish talks about Grosseteste’s ‘Newtonian leap,’ in trying to use the same physics to describe everything in the observable universe, no matter its size. Inevitably, there are aspects of Grosseteste’s work that still seem quite strange to a modern scientist. He was working, after all, with the Aristotelian model of the universe, with a static Earth at its centre, orbited by the sun, planets and stars. In this, according to Tom McLeish, Grosseteste was ‘completely wrong, but wrong in an interesting way.’ And wrong in a way, moreover, that is very much consistent with his initial assumptions. ‘It’s by no means obvious that the Earth isn’t at the centre of the universe, especially if you don’t have a telescope (which wasn’t invented until long after Grosseteste’s death). Which of our assumptions will seem equally bizarre in eight hundred years’ time?’

For Tom McLeish, the ultimate value of the project is to show that science is just as deeply human a thing as other aspects of culture. ‘We used to be sold a coffee table history of science, which said that before the Enlightenment everything was mystical and dark, but then “God said let Newton be – and all was light”. But Newton himself said that he was standing on the shoulders of giants. Who were those giants? We’re getting back to a lost continuity in science, which goes from the Islamic scholars and western thinkers of the Middle Ages, all the way back to the classical world.’

Colour by numbers

It’s not just in his cosmology that Grosseteste’s work comes uncannily close to the findings of modern science. As part of the Grosseteste Project, Hannah Smithson, who is Lecturer in Perception at the University of Oxford, has been working on a new translation of his De colore (‘On Colour’). As she says, this is one of the works that hints most strongly at a prototype scientific method – ‘Grosseteste says for example that “a person who is skilled in manipulating light can make all possible colours”, which sounds very much like he’s describing experiments with a prism, several hundred years before Newton.’ And not only does Grosseteste build a coherent mathematical model to explore what colour is and how it can be described, but he sets out a three-dimensional model for the way that colour operates, depending on the amount of light, its quality, and the quality of the medium in which light is incorporated, which is very close to modern ideas. ‘In the De Luce, Grosseteste even says that it is light that gives matter its solidity, which has clear resonances with what we understand today about fundamental physics.’
A decade of exhibitions

Over the last decade the AHRC has funded the research underpinning a wide range of exhibitions, from major 'blockbusters' at top cultural attractions such as the British Museum and the National Gallery, to smaller exhibitions highlighting often neglected or previously under-researched subjects, sometimes curated by doctoral students or early career researchers. Here is a small sample of those exhibitions.

Right: Magna Carta
A landmark exhibition to mark the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta was held at the British Library in 2015. It brought together two original 1215 Magna Carta manuscripts, the unique 'draft' of Magna Carta, known as the Articles of the Barons (1215), and Thomas Jefferson's handwritten copy of the Declaration of Independence. Curated by Professor Nicholas Vincent (University of East Anglia) and Dr Claire Breay of the British Library.

Right: Hidden Histories of Exploration
This project highlighted the crucial role played by local peoples in the history of global exploration. The project used the extensive Collections of the Royal Geographical Society where a highly successful exhibition was held in 2009.

Left: Christen Kobke: Danish Master of Light
Self-portrait, by Christen Kobke, from a major exhibition of the Danish artist's work at the National Gallery in 2010. Curated by Professor David Jackson (University of Leeds) and Christopher Riopelle (National Gallery).

Right: Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam
This major exhibition held at the British Museum in 2011/12 charted the history of the deeply personal journey that is one of the five pillars of Islam central to Muslim belief. Over 140,000 people from across the UK and the world visited the exhibition. Curated by Dr Venetia Porter.

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Right: Ming: 50 Years that Changed China
In September 2014 the British Museum staged a major exhibition in the Sainsbury Exhibition Gallery on a golden age in China’s history, 1400–1450. The exhibition’s co-curators were Professor Craig Clunas (University of Oxford) and Jessica Harrison-Hall (British Museum).

Below: Picturing Politics
PhD student Chris Burgess curated an exhibition at the People’s Museum in Manchester in 2012 called ‘Picturing Politics’ which explored political posters of the twentieth century.

Left: Shah Abbas
This major exhibition explored seventeenth-century Iran through the reign and legacy of one of its most influential rulers, Shah ‘Abbas I (reigned AD 1587–1629), demonstrating his social, religious and artistic influence on Iran through the gifts he endowed to major shrines in Mashhad, Ardabil and Qum, and his magnificent new capital at Isfahan.

Below: At Home in Renaissance Italy
Revealing for the first time the Renaissance interior’s central role in the flourishing of Italian art and culture, this major exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) provided an innovative three-dimensional view of the Italian Renaissance home, bringing it to life by creating object-filled spaces. Curated by Dr Marta Ajmar-Wollheim and Dr Flora Dennis.

Right: Threads of Feeling
Originally curated and displayed at London’s Foundling museum in 2011, this exhibition showcased fabrics never shown before, fabrics left by mothers with their babies when they parted with them at the original Foundling Hospital. The exhibition subsequently toured the USA.
QUICK-CHANGE ARTIST

A project is restoring the balance between an understanding of Dylan Thomas’s work and his life, writes Matt Shinn

He’s the most requested poet on Desert Island Discs. He’s also the rock star and Hollywood actor’s poet of choice, perhaps because events in his life seem to foreshadow their own problems with addiction and celebrity. He’s on the cover of Sergeant Pepper’s; he’s quoted by George Clooney in Solaris. Bob Dylan took his name.

And Dylan Thomas remains popular despite the great complexity of some of his writing. John Goodby, who is Professor of English at Swansea University, tells a story about being approached with a request to help translate Thomas’s famously difficult poem Altarwise by Owl-light into Polish: ‘I was tempted to say that I would help, once I’d translated it into English.’

Beyond the legend

There are Dylan Thomas societies in countries as far afield as the USA, Japan and Australia, and his work is translated into more than forty languages (including Mandarin). But in Britain his importance has tended to be played down among academics and cultural commentators: according to John Goodby ‘the phenomenon is worthy of a sociological study – how someone so popular with the masses can be so out of favour with the critics.’

Seeking to do something about this, John Goodby’s new edition of The Collected Poems of Dylan Thomas, which was produced with the help of an AHRC Fellowship, was published to mark the centenary of Thomas’s birth, in 2014. The aim was ‘to get away from the distracting legend of the man, and focus instead on the quality of the poetry.’ Sure, Dylan Thomas was a cultural icon: ‘he was young, talented and reckless, like Rimbaud or Keats, and like James Dean he died young. But his image is double-edged: it’s good if it means that people are drawn to his work who wouldn’t otherwise read poetry. But there can be a tendency to stop at the surface with Thomas, while the real action is deeper down.’

As well as including many more poems, the new edition of the Collected Poems presents Thomas’s work in a new order, based on evidence of what was written when. It has been positively received by scholars: Seamus Perry in the London Review of Books singles out John Goodby’s critical commentary ‘for its many acts of assistance: the two hundred pages of notes are full of information and the product of an obviously deep acquaintance.’

Time for reappraisal

John Goodby also worked as the lead on an AHRC panel that advised BBC Wales on programming around the Dylan Thomas centenary. ‘I was pretty useful to the BBC,’ he says, ‘and acted as their consultant on numerous projects throughout 2014, including contributing to three TV films and almost a score of radio broadcasts. And this was ultimately all down to the research that I was able to do, supported by the AHRC.’
The BBC’s main producer for the Dylan Thomas season was Martin Smith. He says: ‘we got in touch with John Goodby, having approached the AHRC and asked them who would be good to work with – we frequently look to the AHRC as a conduit to great researchers, and there’s definitely a greater awareness now within the BBC, of the AHRC as a resource that we can draw on. John was fantastic – whether it was advising the actor Tom Hollander (who was playing Dylan Thomas in a dramatisation) about the meaning of certain lines, and so how they should be read, to appearing on programmes and talking about Thomas’s legacy, it was wonderful working with someone who is so well-informed about the subject matter.’

John Goodby also helped the BBC to reach out to new audiences: programmes about Thomas appeared on Radio 6 Music, for example, as well as on the more obvious Radios 3 and 4. And for Martin Smith, ‘by working so closely with us, and knowing so well what we were trying to achieve across the season, John was able to contribute what he knew we didn’t have from other people. This is a great example of how the BBC is less of an ivory tower than it once was, and so is academia.’

The highlight of the year for John Goodby, meanwhile, was the discovery of a lost Dylan Thomas notebook (covering the period, from 1934 to 1935, when Thomas was first coming to the attention of the literary world), which was subsequently bought by Swansea University. The notebook had been saved by a servant at Dylan Thomas’s mother-in-law’s, when it was given to her, with other ‘rubbish,’ to put into the kitchen boiler – it had been hidden away in a drawer for decades afterwards. It is ‘the most significant addition to the Dylan Thomas archive since 1941,’ says John Goodby. ‘And in personal terms, it meant that I got to be the first scholar ever to look at it (and I appeared with it on BBC Breakfast, to talk about it).’

Poet and performer
And did John Goodby’s view of Dylan Thomas change, during the course of the anniversary events? ‘I thought I’d get sick of him,’ he says, ‘but I found him more and more complex and intriguing. He’s like a quick-change artist. He has so many facets – the poet, the performer, the trickster. You begin to wonder whether he was really two or three people: everyone gives a different account of him.’

‘One of the programmes that the BBC made, for example, involved interviewing some of the people who had met Thomas in little backroom bars in mid-Wales. And perhaps surprisingly, they would describe him as only sipping at his pint: he was not the hellraiser of popular myth, in other words, but someone who was quiet, more interested in talking than in drinking, and always with a book in his hand. And in many cases, the people who had met him were still able to say what he was reading’
Popular culture is proving an increasingly fertile ground for exploring some of the most important questions we face, reports Anne Wollenberg.

Michael Jackson actually had a far more nuanced relationship with ideas of race than we might realise. Researcher Harriet J. Manning argues that he used his stage performances and videos to critique racist constructions of blackness. In 2013 she published a monograph based on her AHRC-funded doctoral research, completed at Newcastle University.

For much of the nineteenth century in America and Europe, the tradition of blackface minstrelsy was a dominant form of popular culture. This was a theatrical form for which white performers ‘blacked up’ to parody black people. Black performers were initially banned from the stage and once allowed, in the late 1860s, were forced to keep playing into the tradition’s stereotypes. ‘It was a complete domination of someone else’s self-representation,’ says Manning, who used sources including drawings, photographs, playbills and lyrics in her research. ‘For black performers, there was no option but to wear the mask and play the role.’

Michael Jackson and the Blackface Mask (Ashgate), proposes and explores the theory that Jackson’s performances were rooted in the racist historical practices of blackface minstrelsy and its mask wearing. ‘There’s an idea that this history is best forgotten because it’s uncomfortable, but we need to talk about it,’ says Manning. ‘That was part of my motivation from the beginning. This history should be more widely known.’

Manning noticed this unexpected paradox: ‘here was a black performer quoting a very racist performative history.’ She started looking into Jackson’s dance moves and gestures. ‘I observed that all his most staple choreographic moves can be traced back to minstrelsy, such as sliding motions, angulated limbs, spins and turns.’

Those moves were designed to mock, Manning explains. ‘Minstrelsy was about presenting an impersonation of a black person in an oppressive, ridiculing way,’ she says. ‘By appropriating them, and the tradition’s stereotypes, into his routines, Michael Jackson rejected a racist construction of black identity, at times through parody and at other times by reclamation such as making the dance moves utterly sublime and “cool.”’

The last four minutes of the music video sees a black panther metamorphosize into the singer, who then commits several acts of vandalism such as smashing windows and a car windshield.

Television networks banned the video and Jackson was advised to issue an apology. Essentially then, it seems everyone missed the point. ‘This video can easily be read as a critique of racist stereotypes,’ says Manning. ‘The uproar about it being broadcast fed right into those same stereotypes.’

‘The panther dance is a continuation and reformulation of some of the basic gestures and stereotypes from blackface dance,’ she adds. These were based on racist constructions and, as the research shows, we’re still allowing those stereotypes to go unquestioned now. We don’t recognise them even when they’re being parodied in front of us.

‘We often don’t realise how little we question stereotypes,’ says Manning. ‘These constructions include falsely associating black people, especially men, with unpredictability, violence, criminality, over-sexuality and animalism — all of which became part of the controversies that surrounded Michael Jackson.’
Another key video is the short-film ‘Ghosts’, released in 1997. In one of the songs it features, ‘Is It Scary?’, Jackson sings: ‘Am I the beast you visualised?’ Manning reads this as a reference to deeply-ingrained stereotypes, which can’t be shifted by will alone – we need to recognise and challenge them. ‘It happens in such a pernicious, quiet, subconscious way,’ she explains. ‘We might think we’re not racist, but we’re still being fed ideas about differences that simply don’t exist. Stereotypes show us what we think is the truth and reflect it back to us, ‘like a mirror reveals the truth’ as Jackson sings in ‘Is It Scary?’’

Jackson’s public persona also functions as a mirror or a mask. We need to consider what cultural baggage has been brought along, says Manning. ‘We all think we own a bit of Michael Jackson. When an artist is very successful and very mainstream, there’s a tendency to overlook what they’ve done creatively.’ Manning’s research has connected her to other academics who are interested in Michael Jackson, such as Nina Fonoroff, Professor of Cinematic Art at the University of New Mexico, who discovered Manning’s work through Dancing With the Elephant, a blog dedicated to conversations about the singer.

Fonoroff’s interests include the role of the audience, which is one of the key themes running through Manning’s book. ‘Michael Jackson has been able to tap into so many existing fantasies, anxieties and desires,’ says Fonoroff. ‘Harriet’s work is a great synthesis of recent ideas about blackface minstrelsy. It helped me to think through these concepts much more clearly.’

Manning’s research is helping Michael Jackson fan Ilke Lenz-Nolte, who translates English texts into German for the All4Michael blog, to ‘know who he really was’. Once Nolte started delving into his work, she says, ‘it was fascinating because I realised all the media stories about him were wrong. Harriet has shown a profound connection between blackface minstrelsy and the music and dance of Michael Jackson that is an essential element of his identity.’

Nolte is particularly intrigued by the one-sidedness of the character in minstrelsy: white people were allowed to mock and literally consume blackness, while black people were reduced to caricatures that they could do little to deconstruct. ‘Jackson turned the tables and played with this one-sidedness so people would feel uncomfortable and guilty about a racist past – or present,’ she says. ‘And the media made him into a freak and a criminal.’

‘In some ways, Jackson’s success worked against him,’ Manning concludes. ‘His work is so rich in cultural quotations that have been largely overlooked.’ Jackson’s image has been filtered and reinvented, just as white people used blackface minstrelsy to control the ways in which blackness was understood.

“Michael Jackson rejected a racist construction of black identity, at times through parody and at other times by reclamation”
Raise a glass

A craft beer distributor is just one of many successes made possible by the groundbreaking work of the AHRC’s four Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy.

James Brown has what must be one of the most enviable of job titles: he is Head of Beer Tasting at Beer52, a fast-growing and innovative online beer-ordering service.

The idea behind Beer52 is a simple one. For £24 a month you are sent a mixed case of eight craft beers, from independent micro-breweries. As you try each beer you get to discover the story behind it, you’re encouraged to interact with the brewers via social media, and if you particularly like what you try, you can order more from Beer52’s online beer shed.

As well as giving the consumer something new, this is a service that really helps the small brewers. There are over a thousand micro-breweries in the UK, who, despite having a world-class product, often produce only on a very small scale, and sell only locally. They don’t have the marketing budget to compete with the major brands, or to get onto the shelves of the big supermarkets. But this way, they don’t have to.

Design in Action

According to James Brown, who is also Beer52’s founder, the company’s origins lie in a road trip he’d taken with his father, from Edinburgh to Faro in Portugal. ‘Along the way we tried all kinds of craft beers that we came across,’ he says, ‘and I got a real taste for them – before, I’d just drink anything.’ He thought: why not turn this new-found passion into a full-time job?
The AHRC and the Creative Economy

The UK’s Creative Economy – embracing the creative industries and the cultural sector – is a dynamic and vital part of our economy. It accounts for more than 5% of UK Gross Value Added (higher than Financial Services, Advanced Manufacturing and Construction), nearly 10% of the economy, and is estimated to be growing at a higher rate than any other sector.

From its earliest years, the AHRC has understood that arts and humanities research is a vital element of the Creative Economy, bringing further creativity, insight and knowledge to a sector as rich and varied as it is successful and innovative.

The Knowledge Exchange Hubs

Since 2012, the AHRC has been funding four Knowledge Exchange Hubs for the Creative Economy to catalyse and harness that creativity and knowledge to support the UK’s vital creative economy.

Working as consortia, the Hubs are connecting excellent research in the arts and humanities with a range of creative and cultural organisations to generate new and exciting knowledge exchange opportunities, foster entrepreneurial talent and stimulate innovation.

These Hubs are:
- The Creative Exchange
- Design in Action
- Creativeworks London
- Research and Enterprise in the Arts and Creative Technologies (REACT)

Getting a business like Beer52 off the ground is all about the details, though. And in this, James had some highly specialised help.

The model for Beer52 was hammered-out during a Chiasma residential workshop, which was focused on the artisan food and drink sector in Scotland, and the question of how design could be used to help it grow, without losing the unique nature of the produce that was being sold. The event brought entrepreneurs together with designers, academics and food producers, to collaborate and develop innovative ideas. Teams that were formed during the event were then able to bid for funding of up to £20,000, to help with the process of commercialising their

CREATIVWORKS LONDON
HEROES PROJECT

Bringing an important London landmark to life

Just north of St Paul’s Cathedral in London is a small patch of peaceful green space, surrounded by tall buildings. Known as Postman’s Park, it is home to one of the City’s most endearing public monuments – the Memorial to Heroic Self Sacrifice, created by the artist George Frederic Watts. The Memorial, unveiled in 1900, lists the names and deeds of 62 people who died while saving the lives of others, and who might otherwise have been forgotten.

A lack of space, however, means that each tablet tells just enough to intrigue, but little more. A collaboration between Dr John Price, a historian and Lecturer in modern British history based at the University of Roehampton and Prossimo Ventures, brought about by Creativeworks London, has filled this gap by developing an app that used Price’s encyclopedic knowledge of the memorial to tell its extraordinary story.

The Everyday Heroes of Postman’s Park mobile app is available for free, and enables anyone with a compatible smartphone to find full descriptions and photos of the sixty-two individuals commemorated on the tablets.

For John Price, coming to understand the technology involved in creating an app led him to think much more carefully about how information about Postman’s Park might be presented while for Prossimo Ventures’ Managing Director Gary Gregson working on the Everyday Heroes app has also brought benefits – ‘the app uses some innovative image recognition software, meaning that you only have to point your smartphone camera at one of the memorial tablets, and it will work out which one it is. We may well find uses for that software in other areas.’

The collaboration with John Price has opened-up other opportunities for Prossimo Ventures, to work with universities. But as Gary Gregson points out, ‘we’d never have met John, without Creativeworks bringing us together.’
ideas: Beer52 received one such award, to develop a prototype.

The Chiasma event was run by Design in Action, the Dundee-based Knowledge Exchange Hub, one of four Hubs supported by the AHRC (see inset box). The idea of Design in Action is to help businesses ‘join the dots’ – developing new ideas and new ways of doing things, by coming together with academics, designers and other creative types. Design in Action focuses particularly on five key sectors: food, information communications technology, wellbeing, sport and rural economies.

Design in Action emphasises the fact that, given the right environment, great new ideas can be sparked in unexpected ways. And James Brown’s experience with Beer52 seems to bear this out: ‘I’d actually gone to the Chiasma event to pitch for something else,’ he says. ‘I had the idea for Beer52 in the car on the way up there.’ But James, who has a background in online marketing, then found the input of designers and academics enormously helpful, in fleshing-out his original concept: ‘having the chance

CREATIVE EXCHANGE

Creating unique experiences out of shared and public objects

The ‘Making the Digital Physical’ theme of Creative Exchange involves moving beyond the primarily visual experiences of flat screens towards ones that can engage all our senses so that the digital public space can also be felt, heard, tasted, smelt, or even worn. Drawing inspiration from research in areas such as: tangible and natural interfaces; perceptive and ambient media; augmented reality/virtuality; hacking and 3D printing, the projects create innovative prototypes that explore plausible futures in which we can turn digital spaces into lived experiences. While all the projects in this theme share this experiential quality, they do so in very different ways, thus reflecting the particular partners within a project.

Physical Playlist is a collaboration between Paul Coulton of Lancaster University, three Creative Exchange PhD students, and BBC R&D. The shared mix tape had an emotional and physical connection that digital shared content often lacks. Writeable CDs came too late or too close to the rise of the mp3 to become a shareable treasured object. This project explores the relationship between the physicality of a shareable personalised object that has digital content embedded within it. Whilst the mixtape offered elements of personalisation, this system offers objects created for the physical playlist that can take almost any form and, being digital, they can also be enabled so that they can only be played on a specific day or at a specific time or when the weather is warm and sunny thus allowing the creator to produce a very unique personalised experience.
to test the idea, with people from different backgrounds, was invaluable. Beer52 wouldn’t have existed without it.’

According to Brian McNicoll, who is Design in Action’s Business Partnership Manager, the contribution of design and academic research to Beer52 was very much in fine-tuning the business model which it is based on. ‘It involved thinking about the different kinds of customers who the service might be aimed at, about how regularly the orders should go out [as the name implies, Beer52 was originally planned as a weekly service], about how the beer should be packaged, and about how the website should look. And it involved examining the research evidence for all of this, showing what works.’

The aim of Beer52 is to build up a culture of beer appreciation, among people who might not currently know any better. As James Brown says, ‘we launched Beer52 just at the right time – when there’s a real trend towards authentic, locally-sourced food and drink. We’re not just trying to find real ale enthusiasts and give them beer – we’re trying to reach people who are like I was – bored of the same old stuff, and willing to explore something new, given half a chance.’

Success brewing
And the signs are that Beer52 has found just the right recipe for its customers. The speed of the company’s growth has been phenomenal: after the initial Chiasma event in April 2013, Beer52 was launched in August of that year, through an offer on the discount website Groupon. It broke Groupon’s UK sales record, selling-out in 48 minutes, and it is now the largest craft beer club in the country, with over 10,000 members throughout the UK and an annual turnover of £2m. Winner of £45k Scottish EDGE Award, James Brown was also named as one of Forbes UK Top 6 Young Entrepreneurs 2014.

So raise a glass to Beer52!
Old data is being used in new ways, to question the effectiveness of prison

Digital Panopticon – the project takes its name from the philosopher Jeremy Bentham’s proposal for a new kind of jail, with cells radiating from a central point, so that inmates could have the eyes of the authorities continuously upon them.

The idea took a while to take off. But in the record-keeping of eighteenth and nineteenth-century penal institutions we can see a similar kind of surveillance increasingly going on, with an unprecedented amount of information being recorded regarding the physical characteristics, personal histories and behaviour of felons, from the colour of their eyes and hair, to their height and build, and their levels of literacy, their occupation prior to arrest, and their religion.

Why this obsessive concern with detail? For Bob Shoemaker, who is Professor of Eighteenth-Century British History at the University of Sheffield, ‘far more information was collected than could be used at the time, and we still don’t know exactly why it was gathered. Some of it may have been to keep track of convicts who escaped, to influence sentencing decisions, or to understand their reasons for offending and re-offending. But more than that, there seems to have been an impulse to count, classify and document, almost for its own sake. Often this impulse came from prison officials themselves: it wasn’t something that was imposed on them from above.’

A new kind of scrutiny
What this record-keeping has left us with is a collection of extraordinarily rich sources of information about eighteenth and nineteenth century criminals. And through digital technology, we’re able now to manipulate and connect up this data, and use it to understand the convicts concerned, much more than was possible at the time. This is what the Digital Panopticon project is all about. Through a collaboration between historians in the UK and in Australia, it draws together more than thirty large datasets, relating to some 90,000 convicts. Digital Panopticon relies in particular on another AHRC-funded project, Old Bailey Online, which since 2003 has transformed an obscure series of 200,000 Old Bailey trial reports, published between the 1670s and 1913, into a formidable digital resource (see page 61).

By matching all this data up, Digital Panopticon lets us see not just who convicts were, and not just what happened to them after they were caught and sentenced, or even what happened after their punishments came to an end: whether or not they found themselves back committing crime. Now we can even look at the fortunes of their descendants, and see the long-term effects of what happened to them.

Best behind bars?
And in particular, we can use the data to ask: which was more effective, keeping criminals in jail, or transporting them to the colonies? For several decades in the 1800s, imprisonment and transportation were used side by side, as alternative methods of punishment. But as Digital Panopticon is beginning to show, of the tens of thousands of people who were sentenced at the Old Bailey, there are big differences between those who were kept behind bars, and those who found themselves in places like Tasmania – differences in terms of their health, their likelihood of re-offending, their subsequent employment, and their long-term family prospects.

According to Professor Barry Godfrey, who is Faculty Research Lead in Humanities and Social Sciences at Liverpool University, ‘prison was seriously bad for your health. You died earlier. Even your children were shorter.’ The transportees tended to be healthier, and they were more likely to get...
This project in particular demonstrates how the humanities can lend themselves to large-scale data analysis.

Consequences
Two years into the project, Digital Panopticon has already contributed to a theatrical performance that was put on at the Old Bailey, in aid of trafficked women. It told the story of Mark Jeffrey, a prisoner whose case was heard in 1849; serving judges portrayed their Victorian counterparts, and the performance took place in the same Number One Court in which Jeffrey was sentenced.

The Digital Panopticon project will also result in an accessible website, which can be used by academics and professional genealogists, as well as family historians.

And importantly, there are implications in this work for policymakers today. As Barry Godfrey says, ‘Digital Panopticon shows how the humanities can have an input into social policy – in this case, regarding the question of what’s most effective in terms of rehabilitating criminals. If we can show that some regimes work better than others, we can help to reduce the enormous cost of crime, and of keeping people in prison.’

For Bob Shoemaker too, the project is raising awareness of the limitations of imprisonment as a means of rehabilitation: ‘transportation is not an option for policymakers now, but there may be elements of it that could be adapted: the change of environment that it involved, for example, or the productive work under close supervision.’ Already, data from the Digital Panopticon project is being used with young offenders, to give them a sense of how their lives might unfold over time, and how their decisions have long-term consequences.

Big Data
Finally, the Digital Panopticon project shows something of the contribution that the AHRC has made, in its first ten years, in developing the Big Data/digital agenda in the UK.

As Barry Godfrey says, ‘this project in particular demonstrates how the humanities can lend themselves to large-scale data analysis. The AHRC has really been leading the way in this, among the Research Councils [Digital Panopticon is supported as part of the AHRC’s Digital Transformations programme – see above], and it continues to do so. They should be commended for it.’

For Bob Shoemaker too, ‘Digital Panopticon has been made possible by the huge success of the Old Bailey Online project, which has enabled so many research projects on diverse subjects. We didn’t specify how the Old Bailey archive would be used – it shows that you don’t always know, at the outset, all the benefits that will come from a project like this. But the AHRC had the courage to back it, and they’ve shown that courage consistently over their first ten years.’
Food, fighting and feelings

The AHRC has supported Rachel Duffett from her doctoral studies to ongoing work with one of the World War One Engagement Centres, reports Carrie Dunn.

While the AHRC celebrates its tenth anniversary, it coincides with the sombre commemorations of the events of the First World War. Many projects investigating elements of the Great War have been funded by the AHRC helping to document the history of World War I – including Rachel Duffett’s fascinating study of food and rations of soldiers serving on the Western Front. It’s a fascinating topic, and one that has not received a great deal of academic attention – but it wasn’t what Duffett was originally looking to explore.

‘What I was really interested in was how working-class soldiers, the bulk of the British army, expressed their emotional responses to the war,’ she confesses. ‘When I went to the archives I was just amazed that they wrote so little about how it felt to be at war. What they did write about, all the time, was food.’

Trawling local and military archives, including those held at the Imperial War Museum, Duffett analysed letters and memoirs from soldiers at the front and developed the idea that their discussion of food was a shorthand for expressing their feelings. She also argues that food is one of the clearest ways in which the attitudes of the military hierarchy to the frontline soldiers were expressed.

‘I think food for many soldiers was a way of expressing the inequalities of the British army,’ she says. ‘There are stories from soldiers saying, ‘A brass hat came to the front, never seen a general there before, but he left after half an hour saying must go, boys, we’ve got roast pork for dinner tonight.’ He may have said that, he may not have done, but what it did do was reinforce to the reader the difference between the officers and the frontline soldiers.

‘There’s a diary where one writes, “They say the Germans are inhuman, but the British are just as bad, some days we have no vegetables at all.” It meant lack of care, it meant that the soldiers felt they were utterly dispensable, and they were treated like animals – what was the point in feeding them if you were going to take them to the slaughteryard shortly?’

Working so closely on the writing of individual soldiers meant she found herself developing attachments to some of the authors.

‘There’s a wonderful letter collection in Suffolk records office, the Stopher letter collection, two brothers, George and Albert,’ she says. ‘Their letters are full of them saying to their mother, “Oh, I could just do with a bit of your homemade batter pudding, Mum”, and this desire to be fed. It’s about maternal love, I suppose, more than anything else.’

The brothers were killed in 1917, within six weeks of each other. Fascinatingly, Duffett was able to trace the Stophers’ descendants, their niece and great-niece, and add additional context to their letters.

‘Their niece talked about spending summers with her grandparents, the soldiers’ parents,
and I asked if the boys were talked about;” Duffett recalls. “She said, “Oh no, no, we never spoke of it, but the front room had their pictures and their medals, but every now and then my grandma would go and stand at the gate of this cottage, look down the road and just cry.” George and Albert were never mentioned, but her interpretation was that the mother was waiting for the boys to come home but they never would. It’s touching to see that those deaths lived on in the family.’

Duffett moved into historical research after some years away from study, and received funding for her PhD at the University of Essex from the AHRC. She describes that financial support as ‘wonderful’, enabling her to make a career change, manage her family commitments around her project and then put together her book based on the study, ‘The Stomach for Fighting: Food and the Soldiers of The Great War’ (published by Manchester University Press).

And Duffett also highlights the AHRC’s continued support of innovative research over the past 10 years as one way in which she’s been able to progress her career.

‘I’m also grateful to the AHRC for their continued funding of research and the way in which they combine it with community engagement activities,’ she says. ‘Currently, a third of my time is funded by the AHRC through one of their five First World War Engagement Centres. So I’m very fortunate in being able to continue my research interest and develop it further through working with a diverse range of community groups and researchers – all thanks to the AHRC!’

‘They say the Germans are inhuman, but the British are just as bad, some days we have no vegetables at all.’

(Handwritten letter from Albert Duffett to his mother, July 3rd 1916.)
The birthplace of British democracy?

An AHRC project is bringing to life a place at the very heart of our history

When you visit the Palace of Westminster today, you move from the Medieval Westminster Hall into the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival building created by Sir Charles Barry and Augustus Pugin. The journey between the two takes you through a grand if rather soulless entrance corridor. But what few visitors (and even MPs) realise is that in the Middle Ages, this was the site of a dazzling royal chapel. Founded by Edward I and sumptuously decorated by Edward III, St Stephen’s Chapel was one of the most lavish ecclesiastical buildings in Europe, designed both as a place of prayer, and to symbolise the power of the kings of England. Modelled on the Sainte Chappelle in Paris, it represented an extraordinary leap forward architecturally, and would prove hugely influential as a model for other buildings in this country.

Choir stalls to Commons benches

It’s what happened to the Chapel after the Reformation, though, that makes the story of St Stephen’s Chapel really extraordinary. During the reign of Edward VI this was the first permanent meeting place of the House of Commons, and MPs would continue to sit here for nearly three hundred years. During a formative period in Parliamentary history, in other words, MPs met in, and shaped their procedures around, a building that had once been a place of worship, with opposing benches where there had once been choir stalls, and with the Speaker’s chair where the altar had been.

Why has the full story of this space not been told before? Previous research on St Stephen’s has been disjointed and surprisingly scant, and it’s been difficult to visualise a building with such a complex history, with little remaining that would give an idea of its original appearance.

Picture this

But now, thanks to an AHRC-funded project, the history of this extraordinary place, which has been at the heart of British public life since the thirteenth century, is being brought to life. ‘St Stephen’s Chapel, Westminster: Visual and Political Culture, 1292-1941’ involves the University of York, the Institute of Historical Research and the Palace of Westminster itself, and brings together historical research with the latest in digital reconstruction techniques. Through the Virtual St Stephen’s strand of the project, the appearance of the site is being imaginatively recreated, during the different phases of its evolution, and using images of parts of the surviving fabric, many of which are now dispersed in museums.

The leader of the project is John Cooper, who is Senior Lecturer in Early Modern History at the University of York. He explains: ‘St Stephen’s Chapel is one of the most extraordinary examples of continuity in British public life – it helped to shape the political culture of the nation. Lots of MPs aren’t aware of it, but the House of Commons that we have today is essentially a reimagining of a Medieval ecclesiastical building. Our parliamentary culture has grown up within a space that was very small, and in some ways inappropriate for debate. And that has had an effect on it, especially in its adversarial nature. We can say that the intimate and oppositional character of debate in the Commons has its origins in the fabric of St Stephen’s Chapel: even the procedure of dividing the House to vote is an echo of the way that MPs exited the Chapel through doors at the end.’

There has already been a public exhibition in Westminster Hall, devoted to the project. And working with English Heritage, there are plans to establish a permanent public display in the nearby Jewel Tower, using the digital reconstructions.

Shared history

A project like this has many beneficiaries. First, there are the visitors to the Palace of Westminster, as well as the people who work in it. ‘For those of us in Parliament,’ says Elizabeth Hallam Smith, who is Director of Information Services and Librarian at the House of Lords, ‘this brings back to us a vital part of our history, which can be shared with everyone with an interest in this lost and remarkable place, whether they are Members of both Houses, parliamentary staff, scholars, visitors, school students or the general public.’

For serving legislators in particular, the project will provide a better sense of the history of their place of work. Presentations have already been made to a number of Parliamentary Committees, and several MPs are taking a close interest in what the project is revealing. For Shadow Leader of the House of Commons Chris Bryant MP, ‘ignorance is rife about the history of the old – and still the
St Stephen’s Chapel helped to shape the political culture of the nation”

The confrontational tone that the hugger mugger chamber created”

longest-serving – home of the Commons. Yet its shape and its architecture framed so many aspects of how we do our business today, from voting by acclamation and division, through to the use of the former King’s pew for the Ministers of the Crown. We shouldn’t be bound by our history, not least by the confrontational tone that the hugger mugger chamber created. But we should understand it better.’

Further afield, too, this project is of interest. As John Cooper says, by simultaneously reconstructing the history, art and architecture of St Stephen’s Chapel, it helps us in the UK to ‘understand one of our great national stories: the transition from sacred royal power to parliamentary democracy. We aim to increase understanding of how the layout of the chapel shaped political discourse, by fostering adversarial parliamentary debate.’ And of course, many other countries have been touched by the development of the UK’s Parliamentary system.

Then there’s the physical effect that the project will have: in Elizabeth Hallam Smith’s words, it ‘will guide us in deciding how best to safeguard and curate St Stephen’s surviving undercroft chapel and cloisters, for the future.’ Talks have begun with the team that is responsible for the restoration and renewal that is currently being planned for the Houses of Parliament: Humanities research will be at the heart of a high-profile programme, in one of the most recognised buildings in the world.

For John Cooper ‘the stories that we’re investigating in St Stephen’s Chapel are extremely important. How extraordinarily fortunate that projects of this scale and complexity can be funded, thanks to the AHRC.’
Under the bombs

The Second World War saw an unprecedented targeting of civilian populations through aerial bombardment. Strange, then, that the experience of those living under the bombs has suffered from comparative neglect among historians, for much of the last seventy years.

The AHRC-funded project ‘Bombing, States and Peoples in Western Europe, 1940-1945’ was the first full research programme on the effects of bombing on civilian populations: the first to focus on the people on the receiving end of bombing, rather than just re-telling the Bomber Boys’ story.

Leading the project, which ran from 2007-2010, was Richard Overy, who is Professor of History at the University of Exeter. For him, there are several reasons why a gap had existed in studies of the bombing war: ‘first, the subject of bombing had generally been treated by military historians, who hadn’t looked so much at the effects of bombing on societies. And secondly, the AHRC project reflected a new willingness to tackle this subject in recent years. Perhaps it’s a generational thing – with the third generation now since the war, it’s becoming easier to look back at difficult subjects with proper historical objectivity.’

The project was also able to bring a new, international perspective to the subject, comparing the effects of bombing in Germany, Britain, France and Italy and the way it has been treated in public memory of the war: ‘For all the similarities in what civilians went through, there are big differences now in the way different European countries remember the bombing,’ says Richard Overy. ‘While in Britain the Blitz is embedded as a central myth of the war, in France there’s little real awareness of the effects of bombing, though similar numbers of civilians were killed. In Germany, meanwhile, the subject is extremely sensitive, with attempts to portray German civilians as victims being treated with suspicion. And in Italy the topic was until recently almost unknown.’

One of the results of the research was a book written by Richard Overy, The Bombing War: Europe 1939-1945, which has sold more than 40,000 copies, and was the winner of one of the International Cundill Awards for Historical Literature in 2014. But for him, the most important change that the project brought about was that it ‘made this subject visible across Europe.’

‘This project could be seen as being part of the healing process: when societies are able to talk about these things, they can get beyond the belief that “we’re the victims.” There’s a shared victimhood. The project has helped us all as Europeans to look at the bombing war with fresh eyes, to ask big questions about the effectiveness of the mass bombing of civilians, and to discover why nearly all the states involved in the war engaged in it despite the moral issues involved in killing civilians (only the Russians didn’t – they thought that it wouldn’t work, and they’ve largely been proved right).’

Forgotten Blitzes

Andrew Knapp is Professor of French Politics and Contemporary History at the University of Reading. His involvement in the AHRC project was to focus on the effects of Allied bombing in France: ‘the history of the bombing war has been dominated by the Blitz,’ he says, ‘and by the controversial Allied bombing of Germany. Its effects on France and Italy have been neglected. Yet some 57,000 French civilians were killed by Allied bombing in the Second World War. The Allies dropped six times as many tons of bombs on France as the Luftwaffe dropped on the UK.’

And Andrew Knapp’s work shows how this project continues to generate interest internationally. Together with Claudia Baldoli, who is Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at Newcastle University, Andrew Knapp drew on his research to write Forgotten Blitzes, looking at the effects of bombing in France and Italy. And this in turn led him to work with a French publisher on a study of the effects of bombing in France as a whole: only the second such book ever to have appeared in the country. Andrew Knapp has also worked as a historical consultant on a documentary on the subject, the first ever to have aired on French TV. ‘Histories of the war years in France have tended to be dominated by the Resistance and collaboration,’ he says. ‘Yet a lot of French people remember the bombing: our work did a little bit to reconnect those memories with what was being written about.’

Perhaps as a result, there seems to have been a greater willingness in France of late, to raise the subject of the bombing war. French President Francois Hollande, for example, recently made a speech at the war memorial in Caen, Normandy, as part of the seventieth anniversary commemorations of D-Day, in which he put civilian victims centre stage.

When societies get are able to talk about these things, they can get beyond the belief that ‘we’re the victims’”
But as Andrew Knapp concedes, this is a delicate subject in France: ‘it’s an easy thing for the Far Right to take up, to say how wicked the Allies were. And while sometimes you get survivors saying “this needed to be said,” others are still full of resentment and bitterness. But if there were no national studies, French people might think that their locality was the only one to have been hit, when in fact Bomber Command alone attacked some 220 different French towns and cities.’

Learning the lessons
What lessons might there be in this for modern warfare, where civilians are also often in the firing line?

For Richard Overy, the research showed that, contrary to expectations, bombed civilians were often capable of a high level of self-discipline and self-help rather than prompting a social or political upheaval. ‘This tends to be played down in war, but it was especially the case where there were strong state structures, which could create a bond between the local and the national. The assumption has often been that political dividends are easy to get through air power, but history does not bear this out.’

For Andrew Knapp, meanwhile, the lesson is that ‘you should never underestimate the resentment that bombing causes. The French population was friendly to the Allies in principle, but we know from correspondence (since the Vichy government opened people’s letters) that by early 1944, they were becoming increasingly hostile. Although politicians have an understandable preference for bombing over boots-on-the-ground, they shouldn’t overestimate what it can do: it doesn’t deliver the results that some think it can. And they shouldn’t underestimate the political damage it can cause. The bombing campaign has been an unconscious undercurrent in the UK’s relations with France ever since.’

And there are signs that these lessons are being taken-up by air forces around the world. Says Andrew Knapp: ‘in the course of a workshop on this subject I met an American who teaches up-and-coming US Air Force officers. His reaction was “what – did we do that?” He now teaches this history to his students.’

The RAF, too, is absorbing some of these lessons, particularly through the professional development of officer cadets exposed to the new history. Richard Overy chairs the RAF Museum Research Board, which advises the museum’s Chief Executive Officer on exhibitions, research, publications and wider academic engagement, and so helps to shape the way that the RAF thinks about its history. And he’s found that ‘the RAF in general has become more alive to its history, and more willing to accept criticism (my book is certainly critical of Bomber Command). Senior officers are more willing to embrace the lessons of the past.’
An open letter for story telling in games

Videogames are a burgeoning area for collaboration between researchers and technologists, writes Adam Oxford.

Headlines about the 'addictive' or 'dangerous' nature of videogames tend to dominate the headlines but, thanks to AHRC funding, one researcher at the University of Portsmouth has gained international recognition and generated thousands of pages of enthusiastic and practical debate not about what games are or do, but what they can be.

His name is Dan Pinchbeck, and in order to engage the right audience for a discussion about the nature of narrative in videogames he didn’t publish an academic paper: he made a game.

The game is called Dear Esther and has been described by The Daily Telegraph as a ‘beautiful and thought provoking piece of work’. It has won awards for story telling and visual art, and received accolades from reviewers worldwide. Most importantly, it’s also been a commercial success, recouping its development costs within six hours of going on sale in February 2012.

Pinchbeck describes Dear Esther as ‘an interactive ghost story,’ and he began working on it as a vehicle for exploring story telling in games.

“My PhD application was to look at how you can use story in virtual environments to increase the sense of immersion and presence,’ Pinchbeck explains, ‘How to think about story as a specific tool for user engagement.

‘I had an epiphany moment when I realised “why am I looking at virtual environments when games are much more interesting?”.

They already use content, character and plot to manipulate the player experience, so I shifted over to looking at story as a gameplay function in first person games.’

With Dear Esther, Pinchbeck wanted to find out what happens if you pare a game experience back until all that’s left is the story. The result is something compelling and unique. It begins as the player takes control of an unnamed and unseen avatar and wades onto the foreshore of a remote and uninhabited Scottish island.

As the player progresses around the island and through an underground cave network, three intertwining stories are revealed which involve a Scandinavian hermit, a syphilitic 18th century explorer with a laudanum habit and a possibly drunk pharmaceutical salesman called Paul. The crux of the narrative is that while returning from a sales conference in Exeter, Paul’s car collides with that of the eponymous Esther, killing her.

The stories are revealed through fragments of letters to Esther read by a narrator, which are triggered as the player passes over particular locations. Each audio clip is selected at random from a selection of potential audio cues, which means that the entire script can’t be heard in one play through.

Even if every fragment was at your disposal, however, it’s never made clear exactly what the relationship between the main characters is. Neither is it explicitly stated whether or not the narrator’s voice is that of the player’s avatar or someone else, or even if the narrator is Esther’s husband, lover or killer.

“We basically decided we had to give you the tools to create your own version of what’s going on,’ says Pinchbeck, ‘It’s about creating a space with these ideas in, and your interpretation of it is equally as valid as anyone’s, including the authors.’

As the player gets closer to the climactic end sequence the stories overlap, leaving you unsure whether or not the key characters are “real” or simply ciphers for a distressed state of mind. The game environment also

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Sales of games in the UK overtook video, music and books last year, making them the primary cultural medium for many young people”
becomes more surreal, with rocks daubed in ever more frantic pieces of phosphorescent graffiti showing chemical symbols, Biblical quotes taken from Paul’s conversion in Acts and electrical circuit diagrams – including one for anti-lock brakes.

Within all this deliberately confusing symbolism, however, the key point about Dear Esther is that most of the elements traditionally associated with a videogame have been stripped out. As a player, you’re unable to make your character run, jump or interact with objects, and there are no puzzles which impede your progress along a predetermined path.

There is the story, told through the narrator’s voice, the musical score and the landscape, and little else. It’s also short, designed to be played from start to finish in one sitting in about an hour and a half. This has led many to question whether or not Dear Esther is a game or, as one fan describes it, a ‘virtual art installation’.

Pinchbeck believes that the “game” of Dear Esther happens away from the screen as players piece together what has happened.

‘People struggle to identify it as a game not because you don’t have a shotgun to face down armies of zombies,’ he says, ‘You have an awful lot of work to do as a player, but it’s not involved in the mechanical act of negotiating the environment.’

Certainly Dear Esther has provoked a reaction in its audience. Aside from its overall popularity, selling 50,000 copies in its first week, few games have been so thoroughly deconstructed by players. There are forums dedicated to analysing every sign and building within the landscape for meaning – even typographical errors in the subtitles.

‘One of the major things that’s come out of the feedback from the commercial release,’ explains Pinchbeck, ‘is that the players’ imaginations rush into the vacuums we created and fill them with experience.’

Alec Meer is a founder of the leading PC games site Rock, Paper, Shotgun. He says that Dear Esther is one of a few games that are tapping into players’ desire for something outside the often formulaic design of major releases.

‘Between Dear Esther and the more ostentatious Journey (released on the PlayStation 3 in March 2012), it’s clear that there’s more of an appetite for esoteric gaming than might have been expected,’ Meer says, ‘Esther’s particular appeal is that it combines a thoughtful pace and an open-ended tale with the kind of production values usually only seen in morally bankrupt odysseys of violence.’

One player who was especially moved by it was Robert Briscoe. In 2009, the 3D artist and level designer had just finished working on a game called Mirror’s Edge for the Swedish company DICE, when he tried the original version of Dear Esther.

‘I was looking to take a bit of a break and I came across Dear Esther,’ says Briscoe, ‘And what really blew me away was the idea that you can tell a story through exploration and that the environment can be more than just a backdrop. That it’s an integral part of the story telling process was really interesting.’

The first release of Dear Esther had been produced using basic visual tools and released for free as a “mod” for the popular game Half-Life 2. Briscoe took this initial version and remodelled the landscapes using more modern software, adding in more details and a sophisticated lighting engine. This made the environments more realistic and gave the whole game a more surreal feel, particularly in the cave and night time sequences which are lit with an unworldly glow from bioluminescent moss and phosphorescent graffiti.

It was Briscoe’s work that led to the Independent Games Festival Award for Visual Excellence, and one reviewer to comment that he’d stopped playing the game and was

“The aim of the project is to increase appreciation of video game art and design as a creative expression and social form”
Dan Pinchbeck writes:

Everybody’s gone to the rapture

Everybody’s Gone to the Rapture started as a project funded by the AHRC’s Follow-on Funding stream. Following the success of Dear Esther, we wanted to continue exploring new ways of delivering narrative in first-person games, but also to more fully explore the potential for IP initially developed within a research-context to prove of value within a commercial setting, and further strengthen the links between industry and academia. Working with a small team of developers, we put together a prototype and support materials that conveyed our vision for a genuinely non-linear, open-world interactive drama. We wanted to create something that drove forwards storytelling, but was also a narrative that could only be realised in a game, drawing on our knowledge and experience gained through our previous titles and focusing on locative storytelling, ambiguity, holistic approaches to narrative delivery and the importance of player agency in a virtual world.

So there were two strands to the work. As we developed the prototype, we were investigating every means we could use for creating the highest sense of presence and agency possible, exploring both game story and other non-linear and interactive stories to ensure we were creating something genuinely open and non-linear that nevertheless maintained the highest possible dramatic quality and intensity, something often traded off for interactivity. Whilst we were doing this, we were talking with Sony Santa Monica about the potential for the game within today’s marketplace, and were fortunate to find a commercial partner as excited about the opportunities for doing something new and different as we were with the AHRC during the prototyping/research phase.

Everybody’s Gone to the Rapture is our first title as a fully fledged commercial game studio. One of the things we are most proud of is that it continues to lend weight to the argument that innovation, research, exploration are not just key principles that have taken root at the centre of our studio, but that these values are the result of our origins in academic research. It also demonstrates clearly that these values are shared across the academia/industry divide, and once again we would like to thank the AHRC and applaud their vision in seeing that cross-sector knowledge transfer is fundamental to driving innovation in such a fast-paced field as gaming.

Images courtesy of Everybody’s Gone to the Rapture
just taking screenshots, as if photographing the island.
Briscoe says that he's learned a lot of valuable lessons for future projects. 'There's a lot of emotional story telling within the environment,' he explains, 'A lot of subliminal signposting. It's a really good example of what players are looking for in games, how far they are willing to go outside the norms of traditional gameplay to have an interesting experience. It gives other developers an idea of what can be done with games as a medium.' This is where the potential of exploring videogames in an academic environment come into their own. Sales of games in the UK overtook video, music and books last year, making them the primary cultural medium for many young people. But commercial developers operate under restraints that can prevent the format from maturing.
'If you’re a game developer, you’ve obviously got high risk areas and low risk areas to work in, and what you’re trying to do is build and innovate within a low risk area,' says Pinchbeck, 'If you’re an academic you can take risks in a completely different way. We can fail, providing we can fail in interesting ways. And that has a direct benefit to the games industry, because we can say we tried this, and it works and no-one’s doing it.'
Pinchbeck believes that the research model he's followed should be repeated more often if universities are to have a meaningful dialogue with the gaming industry beyond mere analysis or finger waving. His follow-up to Dear Esther, Everybody's Gone to the Rapture (see page opposite), created using a similar approach, shows every sign of repeating the success of its predecessor.
'It was important to me to be able to show that universities can do this stuff,' he explains, 'If academics want to do stuff that might be interesting to the games industry, don’t write a paper, make a game. It teaches you a lot about why games are the way they are, and if you haven’t got a background in the industry you need that experience to be taken seriously.'

“ Innovation, research, exploration... are the result of our origins in academic research”
From playground games to Orphan Works: The Beyond Text programme

How do we understand non-textual forms of knowledge in a way that takes account of their long historical roots? **Matt Shin** explores a seminal AHRC research programme.

We’re living in an age where sounds, images and recordings of performances can be circulated more quickly, and more widely, than ever before. There’s greater movement and cross-fertilization between different places and different cultures. And with the development of global communications, we don’t rely on the written word to anything like the extent that we used to.

Trying to make sense of all this was the AHRC’s £5.4 million Beyond Text programme. It was developed in consultation with the AHRC’s academic communities, who were asked to identify priorities for future research. Certain ideas kept cropping up: about the transition from a print-based to a visual culture, and the growing importance of non-textual forms, not just for scholars but for the wider community.

Beyond Text involved creating multidisciplinary networks, bringing scholars together with practitioners from outside Higher Education. In particular, it aimed to enhance the connections between people who make artworks and performances, and those whose job it is to preserve and study them. The programme has helped to inform public policy relating to our cultural heritage, and the future of creative work in this country. It also helped to inform educational practice, at a time when advances in communication technology mean that we’re going beyond our traditional reliance on the written word.

Beyond Text was led by Evelyn Welch, Professor of Renaissance Studies at King’s College London. ‘The programme was very experimental,’ she says: ‘it was designed to ask questions about how we communicate across time and place, without writing things down. The programme explored human communication, and particularly the intangible, momentary and ephemeral experiences of performance, emotion, speech and sound, as well as our responses to the visual and material world. We were interested in the transmission of these experiences, and how they should be preserved for the future.

And we were interested in how non-textual experiences can create strong links between different generations, places and cultures, helping us to understand our complex, interconnected world.’

**You must remember this...**

Elena Isayev is Associate Professor of Ancient History at the University of Exeter. Her projects involved young people and minority groups, especially in deprived communities in Swansea and Glasgow, in thinking about memory, identity, and their own sense of belonging.

‘There’s a widespread misconception that mobility is a recent phenomenon,’ says Elena Isayev. ‘But much of my research, which focuses on ancient Italy, has shown just how much movement there was in the ancient world, how used people were to being around migrants from many different places, and how there was much more to citizenship than just where you came from.’

To raise broader questions about the nature of belonging, and to explore the implications for contemporary culture, two projects were funded as part of the Beyond Text programme: De-placing Future Memory, and a follow-on initiative, Future Memory in Place.

De-placing Future Memory, in particular, looked at the transmission of memory across time and space, and the way that material objects such as artworks can help us understand how memory is embodied in things, and how this in turn affects our sense of belonging. In particular, the project showed how migrant and displaced people can create meaningful monuments that express their stories and identity.

De-Placing Future Memory brought together an interdisciplinary group of academics, along with international artists, musicians and curators, including some from conflict areas (Palestine and Iraq). It included a workshop with 200 school children, and led to the creation of new artworks, and a month-long exhibition.

Future Memory in Place, meanwhile, involved thousands of people in Swansea, including...
Beyond Text in Facts and Figures

150 seminars / conferences / workshops

100+ student-led initiatives

76 Collaborative Doctoral Awards

10 Follow-on Funding awards

7622 films/creations

50+ exhibitions / performances

The programme funded

The programme began in 2007 and ended in 2012

The programme received £5.5 million in funding

When you put really interesting people together in a room, what you get isn’t a linear process”

workshops with 2,700 pupils from nine schools, as well as a refugee and asylum centre.

For Elena Isayev, ‘these projects have strengthened the links between artists, community groups and organisations. For example, art students from Swansea Metropolitan who volunteered on our project have set up a community studio and art space, and are continuing to work with the schools we engaged with.’

‘In particular, we used ancient themes of foreignness, mobility and memory to give us perspective on contemporary problems, helping people to think in a new way about the meaning of community. By looking at the ancient world, you can really see that migration has been the norm throughout history, and that borders are fluid, constructed things.’

‘The value of the Beyond Text programme,’ says Elena Isayev, ‘is that it allowed us to be quite experimental, and to have the space to do things that are not normally done in academia. It gave us a platform to experiment with ideas that didn’t require a textual output – it prioritised other forms of research. And through it, we were able to engage very different groups – not just sharing what we found with them, but having a real dialogue with them.’

Ipi-Dipi-Dation

Another Beyond Text project looked at one of the most transient of cultural forms.

Children’s Playground Games and Songs in the New Media Age was led by Professor Andrew Burn of the London Knowledge Lab at the UCL Institute of Education. The project involved updating the Opie Collection of Children’s Games at the British Library – it digitised material from the collection, and made the archive available to researchers worldwide.

The project also looked at what’s changed in children’s games since the Fifties, and in particular how the oral tradition of playground games continues to be a part of children’s lives, in the age of computer games and the internet. One of the outputs of the project was a documentary called Ipi-Dipi-Dation: My Generation about the forms of play that were observed.

For Andrew Burn, this project was a good example of how the Beyond Text programme meant ‘getting away from the usual forms of textuality that have tended to be privileged in arts and humanities research. Children’s playground games cover language, gesture, dance routines and use of the environment. They’re of interest to everyone, though they’re heavily gendered – everyone remembers the games they played.’

The project also touches on a number of contemporary concerns – about the diminishing number of places where children can play, for example. ‘There are implications in the project for playground design,’ says Andrew Burn – ‘it shows that thoughtful design is worth investing in.’ Then there’s the importance of play in child development: ‘playgrounds are densely cultured spaces, in ways that often go under the radar of adults. If you look at what goes into children’s games – rhyme, dance, music – there’s an embryonic arts and humanities curriculum right there, with children coming up with their own creations. Often they’re doing much more complex things in the playground than they are in the classroom.’

Serendipity

For Evelyn Welch, another important legacy of the Beyond Text programme has been in the area of legal policy, with follow-on projects on copyright in music and dance, and in the area of Orphan Works (where the original rights holders can’t be identified). The AHRC provided further support in commissioning a scoping study, entitled Copyright and Creativity: New Business Models for a Digital Age, which looks at the changing nature of copyright in the Creative Economy.

But then, says Evelyn Welch, this was a key point about the strategic programmes as a whole: ‘they recognised the importance of leaving space for follow-up funding, to make the most of serendipity. When you put really interesting people together in a room, what you get isn’t a linear process. You don’t know exactly where it will lead.’

‘Only the AHRC has the links with this astonishingly wide range of disciplines, business organisations and cultural bodies, to have brought this programme about. It’s given us the chance to think in a dynamic, non-linear way about some of the things that make life precious: the things we invent, the memories we leave behind.’

Read me

The Embodied Emotions project involved a primary school in East London. It helped to meet some of the Government’s policy objectives, by developing an educational programme that can be used in schools to teach emotional literacy, helping children to manage their own feelings and become aware of the feelings of others. It brought together historians, performers, educators and children themselves, using role-play and drama to investigate how bodily movements and facial expressions can make feelings apparent.
Increasing mutual understanding through art

A collaborative research project that unlocked the potential of Fijian art and artefacts in the UK and overseas is having a series of exciting and unforeseen impacts, writes Carrie Dunn

A collaborative research project - ‘Fijian Art: political power, sacred value, social transformation and collecting since the 18th century’ - was an AHRC-funded project that ran from 2011 to 2014. Jointly hosted by the Sainsbury Research Unit (SRU) at the University of East Anglia and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) at the University of Cambridge, it curated a series of exhibitions of collections held in various museums, most of which had never been displayed, thoroughly researched or documented.

The first of these exhibitions, Chiefs and Governors: art and power in Fiji, was held in Cambridge in 2013. The project systematically researched, analysed, documented and identified Fijian collections across the UK, making the collections more accessible and also enhancing museum staff knowledge and database records via expert identification and analysis. It provided a remarkable model of collaboration and genuine sharing of resources, knowledge and skills.

Principal investigator Steven Hooper began conducting his own research in Fiji in 1977, and has kept up that link ever since. ‘Fiji is interesting for various reasons,’ he explains. ‘It’s a remarkable place in the Pacific that’s had a long history of building great ocean-going canoes – some longer than Captain Cook’s ships – and it is of special interest here because it was a British colony for a long time. As a result of that, there are large collections of Fijian material in this country, brought back by voyagers, missionaries and colonial officers.’

Nine project partner museums were selected because of their outstanding and significant Fijian collections: the British Museum in London; Fiji Museum in Suva, Fiji; Maidstone Museum & Bentliff Art Gallery; Paris’s Musée du quai Branly; Edinburgh’s National Museum of Scotland; Peabody Essex Museum, in Salem, Massachusetts; Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford; Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC; and the World Museum Liverpool.

‘They were chosen because they have collections whose dates of acquisition are known, so art-historically we can begin to get a much more sophisticated understanding of dynamic local developments, especially in the 19th century,’ says Hooper. ‘Museums in Britain, large and small, are full of things that have accumulated over the last 200 years, but they’re starting to emerge and be worked on, and the AHRC are playing a great role in this. One of the outcomes of research is that these collections can be presented to the public in these various places.’

The project contributed towards knowledge transfer by disseminating research to a range of academic and public audiences, through exhibitions, catalogues, publications, outreach programmes and conferences. These enabled museums to display and interpret their Fijian material for the benefit of multiple audiences, including the British-Fijian communities in the United Kingdom as well as the global Fijian population.

‘There are Fijian things in museums all over the UK,’ says Hooper. ‘I was thinking how we could have some engagement with them. They don’t have specialist curators, so I put in as part of the AHRC bid what I called ‘exhibition packages’. We would contact smaller museums around the country and offer them a service: if they’ve got some Fijian things they’d like to put on display – it could be one object, or a case of objects, or a small exhibition – we could offer them research expertise and information to help them frame their displays for their audiences. This has worked out very well, and museums from Aberdeen to Plymouth have taken up the offer.’

Torquay Museum is one of the local establishments who worked with the project team to put on a locally-focused exhibition.

‘A couple of people who lived in Torquay had spent a lot of time in Fiji working for the colonial government and had donated their collections to the local museum. The museum decided to do an exhibition about its local history, connecting Torquay with Fiji,’ explains Hooper.

Torquay curator Barry Chandler described his museum’s collection as ‘fairly unknown but rather fantastic’, and praises the expertise of Hooper’s team. ‘It was brilliant working with them – they told us so much about our items, their knowledge is so amazing, and it’s added really interesting detail to our objects,’ he says. ‘It’s probably the most enjoyable project I’ve been involved in during my 20 years here.’

As well as exhibiting existing material, the project also resulted in the construction of a brand-new 8-metre-long double-hulled canoe.

Breastplate, civavonovono, of whale ivory, pearl shell and vegetable fibre. This breastplate was collected by Sir Arthur Gordon, first Governor of Fiji between 1875 and 1880. It previously belonged to Ratu Seru Cakobau, Vunivalu (war chief) of Bau who inherited it from his father Ratu Tanoa Visawaqa. MAA Z 2730.
The idea behind this is that canoe-building still takes place in remote parts of Fiji, but it is close to dying out,’ says Hooper. ‘What we wanted to do is encourage the old canoe-builders to pass on their skills to younger men. The canoe will be shown at a large exhibition in Norwich in 2016. It will be left in parts for shipping, and we plan to bring carpenters over to reassemble it as part of the exhibition, so people can see how it is made. Without the AHRC funding for the original research, none of this would be happening.

‘And there’s a further story, which I’ve discussed with the new UK High Commissioner to Fiji and Fiji’s High Commissioner in London. As young people tend to migrate to the city, the outer islands become sparsely populated. If we can encourage regular canoe building in the outer islands, possibly for sale to tourist hotels in Fiji, young men can be gainfully employed, which would be an excellent rural development initiative.’

Fiji’s High Commissioner, Mr Solo Mara, has been quick to praise the research, describing it as creating ‘a valuable source of knowledge’. He links the presence of Fijian objects in British museums with deep-seated characteristics of both Fijian and Pacific Island culture: ‘The practice of gift-giving is elaborately practiced in all Pacific Island cultures, and in Fiji it holds a special and honorific status in any traditional ceremony marking the interaction of two groups of people. It is therefore of no surprise to learn of the presence of these large collections of Fijian artefacts in the UK, which to me is indicative of the close working relationship between Fijian chiefs and British colonial administrators in the nineteenth century; the latter receiving many diplomatic gifts and forming their own collections. Some of these artefacts are today showcased at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University as part of the Fijian Art Project.’

More than this, he suggests that these objects and the mutual understanding they generate can lead to new perspectives on our complex and deeply entwined histories: ‘These collections of Fijian Artefacts are capable of rekindling and nurturing new relationships between current generations of Fijians and their British counterparts, particularly in teaching us of the historical significance of British colonial rule in Fiji and the Pacific Island region as a whole. For me, these Fijian artefacts also complement my role in representing Fijian culture and art in the UK and Europe.

‘The Fiji Government is therefore especially pleased to support the efforts of the Fijian Art research project in researching these artefacts and curating exhibitions that present more sophisticated understandings.
of Fiji and Britain’s shared history. At long last we have clear evidence of the skills of Fijian wood carvers, pottery makers, weavers and other artists that have turned Fijian hardwoods, whale ivories and local materials into exquisitely designed jewelleries, tapa cloth, potteries, war clubs and spears.’

Similarly, the British High Commissioner to Fiji, Roderick Drummond, praises the project’s commitment to increasing mutual understanding between the UK and Fiji: ‘Cultural collaborations like the Fijian Art project are extremely valuable, and something that the British government is very happy to support. Such research and exhibition collaborations are an important channel for sustaining academic and people-to-people links between the UK and Pacific nations like Fiji, because they can touch people in ways that governments cannot. The canoe-building initiative is also a project that I hope will have a positive impact on the preservation of Fiji’s rich heritage.’

The project also includes a focus on women’s textile arts and the dynamic Fiji fashion scene. Hooper admits that it is a bigger project than originally anticipated, but that means it will also have greater outcomes.

‘The heart of the project was this research on the Fiji collections, and this allowed us to make all sorts of positive connections, some of them unanticipated,’ he concludes, ‘and through these we are gaining much more nuanced understandings of Fijian and British history.’

Further information is available at: www.fijianart.sru.uea.ac.uk
Debates
A series of ten debates are being held at universities and cultural organisations around the UK during 2015 and early 2016. The theme of the series is 'The Way We Live Now' and individual debates are focussing on more specific themes including The Future City, Curating the Nation, the Challenge of Change, the Death of Digital and many more.

These debates are examining key aspects of our human world, the ways in which they are changing and shaping our lives, and explore the ways in which the arts and humanities can help us understand our changing world.

All debates are being live-streamed and made available as video recordings through the AHRC website. Please go to www.ahrc.ac.uk/ahrc10 for further details or follow the debates on Twitter on @ahrcpress or #ahrc10

Essay competition
To help build a legacy around the anniversary debates, capture the ideas expressed by speakers and members of the audience and provide an exciting opportunity for doctoral students, the AHRC is running an essay competition linked to the debate series. The competition is open to any current doctoral student registered at an eligible organisation.

See www.ahrc.ac.uk/ahrc10 for further details.

The AHRC Research in Film Awards
The AHRC’s Research in Film Awards are designed to showcase, reward and recognise the best of the large and increasing number of high-quality short films produced as outputs or by-products of arts and humanities research. In addition, the Inspiration Award – open to members of the general public – will recognise those films inspired by arts and humanities research.

Follow-On Fund Highlight call
The AHRC Follow-on Funding for Impact and Engagement Scheme provided funds to support innovative and creative engagements with new audiences and user communities which stimulate pathways to impact. Now closed, this highlight call looked to encourage researchers funded by the AHRC in its early years to revisit the outcomes of their research.

Cheltenham Festivals
The AHRC partnership with Cheltenham Festivals was broadened in 2015 to give opportunities to researchers at any stage in their career to apply to present at one of the four Cheltenham Festivals in 2015. The Jazz Festival events and the Music Festival events have already been announced. Literature and Science event announcements will follow later in the year.

Connected Communities Festival
The second Connected Communities Festival took place between the 15th and the 22nd June. Around 40 events were held across the UK. For further details please go to: www.ahrc.ac.uk

Celebrating success
Key to the AHRC anniversary activities is the highlighting and celebrating of the many successes of the arts and humanities research community over the last decade. These successes are being showcased in a number of ways, including:

* An online timeline highlighting some of the major events over the last decade and more
* A series of films designed to highlight projects and people funded since 2005 including the Oxyrhynchus Papyri project, which has received AHRC funding since 2005, Picturing China, and Mackintosh Architecture, among many others. For further information please go to: www.youtube.com/ahrcpress
* Case studies and feature articles to showcase the impact of AHRC funding (see examples on these pages)
* A tenth anniversary publication to be launched in the Autumn
* A series of virtual exhibitions of anniversary-related images displayed in the AHRC Image Gallery over the year. See www.ahrc.ac.uk/gallery

For the latest up to date information, please go to: www.ahrc.ac.uk/ahrc10 or follow us on Twitter on @ahrcpress or #ahrc10

Get involved
Logos
If you would like to use the AHRC’s anniversary logo on your website or your publication to highlight your link with the AHRC during 2015, please see our style guide or write to: communications@ahrc.ac.uk

Feedback or ideas
The AHRC has consulted widely over the last year to develop these activities and are keen to ensure that this continues through 2015. If you would like to give us feedback or to make suggestions for our anniversary activities, please write to: communications@ahrc.ac.uk