



Travel Award & Research Project Reports

2012



An in-house publication by St John's College, Cambridge, 2013
A joint production by the Tutorial Department & Development Office

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Photographs:

Front cover image taken in Istanbul, Turkey by Fergus Hamilton
Back cover image taken in Kyrgyzstan by Joanne Smith

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Travel Awards

Backwaters, tigers and slums: Travelling southern India in the monsoon

by Rebecca Jevons

Location: India

Award: B H Farmer Fund

Dates: September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I travelled in southern India for about three weeks during the month of September. I visited a number of places including the state of Kerala, Goa, Karnataka and finally the city of Mumbai. I experienced a



diverse range of situations including elephant rides in Periyar National Park, riding mopeds through the ancient temples of Hampi and shopping in the crowded streets of south Mumbai.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I enjoyed my time spent in India. Despite the relatively short distance covered, the diversity of cultures was clearly evident. Travelling by train between states, it wasn't just the visual environment that transformed: the people's habits, language and religion also changed, resulting in a unique experience only found in India.



What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Language posed the biggest barrier to my experience. It would have been extremely rewarding to be able to have long conversations with different people I met, but this was unfortunately often made

difficult by our inability to communicate with one another. This challenge was one that was extremely difficult to combat over just a three-week period.



How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

The trip gave me an invaluable insight into the workings of India. Though a true and thorough understanding can never be achieved, it was certainly an experience that I learnt a lot from. This new

knowledge will be of particular use during my Part II studies when I will be studying Contemporary India as part of my Geography Tripos.



Immigrant rights and policing in Arizona

by Timothy Bengler

Location: Phoenix, Arizona, USA

Award: B H Farmer Fund and Undergraduate Academic Research Project

Dates: 2–28 September 2012

I travelled to Phoenix to stay in the city for four weeks to do fieldwork for my Part II Geography dissertation on immigrant rights and policing in Arizona. My investigation was into the extent to which the social reproduction of discrimination in Arizona proliferates and cements racist ideas that consequently pervade the practices of the police.

One line of investigation I particularly wanted to pursue was a controversial law, called SB(Senate Bill) 1070, which was signed into law by the then-governor of Arizona, Jan Brewer, on 23 April 2010, sparking protests across the US. The bill obligates the police to determine the immigration status of anyone who they are in lawful contact with where there is a reasonable suspicion that the person is an illegal immigrant. Barack Obama has said that the law would ‘undermine basic notions of freedom that we cherish as Americans’, and indeed, on 6 July 2010 the Department of Justice filed a lawsuit against the state of Arizona challenging SB1070. However, whilst

the resultant injunction brought about modifications to the law, it is still in place and still, according to its critics, encourages racial profiling. This turned out to be my most fruitful line of investigation in Phoenix. Everyone had something to say about SB1070, and I was surprised at the balanced attitude people had towards the law, given the sensationalist attitude towards it in the UK media. There were many who saw the law as simply enforcement of the US constitution, and not at all anti-immigrant in its nature. However, I found that positionality was an important factor in this. Whilst policy-makers in Arizona tended to see the law as relatively unremarkable, immigrants’ rights campaigners and academics were far more scathing of it.

It was these last two groups who gave me a huge amount of help throughout my time in Arizona. Phoenix’s Art and Activism community is a close-knit one, and I was lucky to be staying for a while with a paralegal who was very involved in the community. This meant that while I was in Phoenix I was able to meet a number of those people most active in opposing the actions of the police in Arizona. This included a group of first-generation immigrants without documentation to live in the US called the Arizona Dream Act Coalition (ADAC). The Dream Act is a proposed pathway to legal status for immigrants that has not been passed into law in Arizona as of yet. ADAC are a group of so-called ‘Dreamers’ who campaign for the law to be passed through so that they can attain legal status in the US. The highlight of my trip was a full day spent carrying out interviews

in ADAC's campaign headquarters, where the full-time members of staff and volunteers were incredibly welcoming and forthcoming, spending hours of their time explaining their position in Arizona and stories they had relating to their experiences with the police. I got a sense of the absurdity of their positions. Many Dreamers have lived in the USA since they were very young, sometimes just a few weeks old. They have grown up in America, and may have little to no sense of identity with their country of nationality – having never lived there for more than a few weeks! However, US law has no flexibility in this regard, and thus Dreamers have devoted their lives to campaigning for recognition and fair treatment.

Without travelling to Arizona I could not have got an impression of the vast array of opinions towards immigration law and the policing of immigration there. Whilst policy-makers and other members of the largely conservative political community in Phoenix took a favourable stance to strict immigration laws, many highlighted to me the points of injustice and absurdity in Arizona's stance on immigration and the consequent potential for discriminatory actions by the Phoenix Police and Maricopa County Sherriff's Office. I am glad to have spent time in Phoenix and met the inspiring people I did, but I hope that when I return there one day, there are not people in the state who have to struggle for their basic human rights.

Investigating attitudes towards tree planting in Bunyoro – Kitara Diocese, Western Uganda

by Mercy Dennis-Smith

Location: Hoima, Uganda

Award: B H Farmer Fund and Undergraduate Academic Research Project

Dates: 29 June–11 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I travelled to Western Uganda to carry out research on attitudes towards a tree planting project being run by a Church of Uganda diocese, wanting to find out how it was being received by local communities and what was informing their attitudes. I spent several weeks carrying out interviews in the town of Hoima and several villages within the diocese.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

Overall, I simply enjoyed the opportunity to live for an extended period of time within the local community, making friends and learning to live by the same timings and some of the same expectations as locals did. As far as a specific highlight goes, it would have to be the day I attended a 70th birthday

party. I arrived back late morning to be greeted by the hostess of the place I was staying, who informed me that I should have neither lunch nor dinner that day. Confused, I asked why not, to which she simply replied, 'Because it is my father's 70th birthday, and you are coming to the party - you are family now!' A hungry afternoon was more than made up for by the joyous evening that followed!

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The most challenging aspect of my time in Uganda was attempting to organise interviews in villages outside Hoima. This required turning up in villages and attempting to make initial contacts via an interpreter, and then hoping that when we returned a day or two later word would have been spread as promised. It was a rather nerve-racking method of working, coming from a world where meetings are arranged via email, but ultimately successful and it helped me to understand the way Ugandan culture worked in more depth.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

The data that I gathered whilst in Uganda will go towards my final year dissertation, and my experiences of living in another culture will both stay with me for life and, I'm sure, inform future travels and periods of living overseas.

Capturing Albania on 35mm

by Megan Elisabeth Stig Sorensen

Location: Albania

Award: C W Brasher Fund

Dates: 22–29 June 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

The objective of the trip was to get a true sense of Albania, a country with a long history of turmoil. Albania experienced very hard-line communist isolation, and so has a deep sense of identity that has yet to be diluted by the tourist industry or inclusion into Europe. Travel books describe it as an exciting and turbulent country born from a mix of many cultures – Roman, Ottoman, Italian and communist; and I was curious to get a sense of this not very well known corner of Europe and to see whether its unique history could still be felt. I chose film photography to try and portray its distinct cultural mix; the deliberation with which each shot is taken forces careful consideration.

To get a sense of the country as a whole I travelled to different kinds of cities. Tirana, the capital, has been very obviously influenced by communism, with a huge communist mural dominating the main square. Berat, on the other hand, is a far more picturesque town that is almost entirely Ottoman, with ornate houses encircling a fortress on top of a hill. Durres



was one of the few places where tourism had begun to take hold, and it was ‘tackier’ but when sitting on a beach chair and being offered fruit by a man with his mule you feel that tourism hasn’t quite taken over yet. The imposing ruins of Shkodër Castle added a sense of the Italian dimension to Albania, though the rest of the city felt fairly industrial. Throughout the



trip I attempted to capture the character of each city through photography.

When travelling between the cities, I noticed bunkers (surviving from the communist rule, when 700,000 were built in response to the fear of invasion) liberally scattered round the countryside, providing a constant reminder of how recently Albania's democracy was established. Initiatives to paint the bunkers or turn them into cafes seem to indicate a positive attitude of making use of what their past has given them as opposed to destroying or denying it.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I enjoyed the process of composing the shots; the challenge of how to get across what I experienced and my specific version of it. Additionally, the hours spent in the St John's College dark room afterwards were very enjoyable and gave me an opportunity to reflect on the trip. I find developing very satisfying, especially the stage when you first see the photo take shape on a previously blank page.

The travelling process within Albania was very different to what I have experienced elsewhere – to travel somewhere all you have to do is walk along certain streets and if you have a backpack on minibuses will call out their destination. If the destination is where you want to go you just hop on, to what is already a stuffed minibus! It was a bit strange at first, but I loved the sense of freedom and lack of regulation. We quickly learnt that in Albania





very rarely does anything seem to be planned very far ahead.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Bar the mosquitoes, the main challenge was trying to plan logistics. For instance, the original plan was to visit Saranda, but we found that the bus took double

the time we had thought as the roads were in very poor condition. This made it impossible to include that city within our short trip. Once we accepted that we couldn't follow our original plan, we became flexible and then the 'ad hoc' travel became thoroughly enjoyable.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

The project gave me the opportunity to visit a country that was very different to anywhere I have ever been before. Though it would be naive to think that a country's character can be fully understood within just eight days, I believe that I achieved a feel for Albania's culture. I am grateful for this, as I think it is by gaining such an 'insight for other cultures that we can build up a more nuanced and complex picture of the world we live in, and that this is an integral part of one's own development.

There is a tendency in the world of 'Westernisation', and though it brings many benefits it often comes at the cost of national identity/culture. I really appreciate the fact that I managed to see Albania with its communist past still influential, rather than seeing a country that has been 'white-washed' so it can fit in with a universal sense of modern nations.



I am very grateful to St John's College for making this trip possible.



Off the beaten track: Surveying the scenery of South China

by Aurora Horwood

Location: South China

Award: Johnian Society Travel Exhibitions & C W Brasher Fund

Dates: 4–20 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Arriving first in Hong Kong, I enjoyed the sights of the metropolis: riding up the Peak tram, immersing myself in incense at Man Mo Temple, and journeying to Lantau Island to see the world's largest seated, bronze Buddha statue.

Following this, I made my way to mainland China, to Guangzhou in Guangdong province. A bustling city, though often missing from traveller's itineraries, it had much to offer. Whilst there I visited the mausoleum of the Nanyue King, as well as the ancient fourth-century Guangxiao Temple and the Temple of the Six Banyan Trees. I learnt about the city's history at Zhenhai Tower, enjoyed the traditional Lingnan building style of Chen Clan Ancestral Hall, and admired Shamian Island's architecture that stands as testament to the city's colonisation.

Travelling to Kaiping, I saw the World Heritage-listed diaolou, which are fortified residences and watchtowers that are spread out over its environs. At Li Garden and Zili village I was able to enter and explore the towers, which were influenced by a diverse selection of European architectural styles, and are dotted around picturesque paddy fields.

Returning to Guangzhou I then made my way to Guilin, in Guangxi province. A visit to the city's Seven Stars Park allowed me to climb karst peaks, explore caves and waterfalls, as well as watch wild monkeys scramble around. In Longsheng county, a visit to Huanglao village allowed me to observe the local women who are famed for their long hair, which in some cases measures up to 1.8 metres long. Even more impressive though, were the Dragon's Backbone rice terraces. Hiking through these beautiful terraces was thoroughly enjoyable, and offered wonderful views of the lush and verdant countryside.

To reach Yangshuo I took a bamboo raft down the Li river, which allowed me to further enjoy the karst peak landscapes of Guangxi province. Arriving in Yangshuo, I hired a bike and ventured outside of the small city to explore the surrounding countryside. Cycling along dirt tracks and passing through rural villages allowed me to observe the everyday life of farmers and villagers. Reaching the 600-year-old Dragon Bridge afforded beautiful views of the Yu Long river, and cycling back past the river I took rough and bumpy tracks through valleys, exploring caves as I made my way to Moon Hill. Climbing to its pinnacle, I gained breathtaking views of the









surrounding countryside and karst peaks. Watching sunset from the top of the hill was an amazing experience, although it meant making my way down the hill during rapidly advancing darkness, and a precarious cycle back to Yangshuo without lights!

Exploring the area outside Yangshuo further, I undertook other activities, including visiting a large Banyan tree, climbing more karst peaks, and rock climbing at the Swiss Cheese crag, situated in a beautiful valley.

[What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?](#)

As a whole I greatly enjoyed my travels in China. The country has so much to offer, be it natural beauty, cultural richness, or culinary delights. As an avid photographer, I really enjoyed the many opportunities to take photographs of picturesque landscapes, and to develop my skills further as a result. However, what I really relished was being able to explore the beautiful scenery of Guangxi. By travelling through rural villages, I was able to get a sense of the disparities that exist in China, between such rural areas and China's ultra-modern cities. The one experience that most stands out from my travels though was watching the sunset from the top of Moon Hill. Not only was I surrounded by breathtaking and other-worldly topography, but the cloud formations and colours of the







sky were magnificent and almost looked unreal as the sun set and the sky was suffused with beautiful shades of red and orange.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Having never travelled on my own before, this was initially challenging. However, it was an enjoyable learning experience, and allowed me to meet many fellow travellers whom I may not have met otherwise. Moreover, I did not only encounter other foreign travellers, but was able to interact with local people, and thus gained a greater experience of Chinese culture. By talking to Chinese people themselves, I was able to gain further understanding of the country, and found it an interesting and enlightening experience.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Visiting museums, historic sites and Buddhist temples have all given me greater knowledge and understanding of Chinese history and culture. Soaking up Hong Kong's history endowed me with a greater understanding of the impact of colonisation on the city, whilst experiencing China's culture first-hand allowed me to glimpse the ways in which the country's Eastern culture has amalgamated Western elements. As a result I feel I have also gained a new perspective on China's political culture, a topic that greatly interests me.



On a personal level, independent travel has made me more self-reliant, and given me greater confidence for future travel. Not only would I now feel very comfortable travelling independently in the future, but the experience has also further developed my interpersonal skills.



I had a fantastic time travelling in China, and am very grateful to the College for awarding me the grants, as well as the great generosity of those who contribute to such funds.

Exploring culture through language in Albania

by Katie Humphries

Location: Albania

Award: C W Brasher Fund & Roberts Fund

Dates: 22–29 June 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

The aim of the trip was to see how a little bit of language could go a long way in opening the door to a new culture. In the infancy of its tourist development, and with a language bearing no relation to those that I am currently studying, Albania presented both an intriguing cultural and linguistic unknown. Armed with an Albanian phrasebook, the challenge was to gain a deeper understanding of the country by engaging with its people. To gain a comprehensive perspective on Albania we chose four places to visit, each representing a different aspect of the country. The beautifully preserved architecture and fort in Berat showed us the Albania of the Ottoman Empire, whilst the concrete vestiges of communism in Tirana, the capital city, bore testament to the country's more recent past. Shkodër and Durrës provided a striking example of the polarity of tourist development in Albania. Possessed of the natural resources of a stunning lake and coastline respectively, they juxtaposed two very different







How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This trip really reinforced to me why I love studying languages. At university I spend most of my time studying French and Spanish literature and the more complex grammatical points of these foreign languages. I really enjoying studying languages at this depth, but Albania allowed me to recapture the elementary reason why I became interested in languages in the first place. The magical moment when a hesitant utterance of unfamiliar words successfully transforms into directions to where you want to go, or an ice-cream ordered without having to point to the flavour you want. In Albania, ordering *akullore* (ice-cream) once again became a magical achievement, and a much repeated feat at that once I realised that the answer to my question '*sa kushton?*' (How much?) was the equivalent of 20p! So, although I may have regressed back to the very basic roots of my studies, this trip revitalised my passion for languages and my motivation to keep exploring other cultures.



I thoroughly enjoyed expanding my cultural horizons in Albania, and would just like to thank the College for making such an experience possible.

A journey to the Andes: Volunteering as an English teacher in Cusco and trekking through Peru and Bolivia

by John G Boghossian

Location: Peru and Bolivia

Award: C W Brasher Fund & Ulysses Travel Fund

Dates: 15 September–31 October 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I was assigned to an English and Science teaching position as part of an NGO in Cusco, Peru, called Maximo Nivel. I taught basic and intermediate English classes to students from 11 to 55 years old at a community centre in downtown Cusco called Qosko Maki (Qosko is the Quechua, i.e. pre-Hispanic, pronunciation for Cusco). Every evening between 5pm and 9pm, I taught four one-hour classes to students, which included English (basic and intermediate grammar, vocabulary and conversation) and Science (this involved everything from basic topography and geography to natural sciences).

Besides helping out at the community centre, I helped a team of volunteers build bathrooms for a new section of a primary school in a Cusco suburb. This manual work mainly involved carrying materials

from place to place, building walls, painting and installing basic plumbing. This placement was for about two to three hours every other day.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

On the teaching side, I really embraced my role and gave my best for the students who came every day. My greatest satisfaction was seeing the number of students increasing from about four per hour on the first few days to about 20 at the end of the month. Feeling like they were learning, and therefore coming back and telling their friends to come by, was extremely gratifying.

I also had never taught something formally to a large group of people or experienced a classroom from a teacher's point of view. This made for interesting developments, such as learning how to perfect a lesson and how to channel people's concentration.

On the manual work side, I appreciated the physical aspect of the task, which made me realise the difficulties of physical labour, as opposed to sporting activities. Not being able to stop when I wanted, and having to carry on working until the other workers told me the next water break was up, was a facet of teamwork I had experienced in sports but never to this extent.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

In teaching, I found it hard to build consistency in my lessons. For example, it was important that every class learnt the same amount every day, since many students chose a different session from one day to the next and expected to carry on from wherever they left off. Therefore, I had to make sure that I covered roughly the same amount, regardless of the wide distribution of knowledge in the classroom and the wide variety of tangents students often wanted me to go on. Being able to maintain a certain rhythm throughout every hour of teaching was one of the most difficult things to master, but gladly I was able to achieve it by outlining objectives for every class and trying to carry on to the next one after a specific amount of time.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

In terms of my course at the University, which was an MPhil in Energy Technologies, I did not learn any new notions or apply any principles on this particular project. However, my trip to Peru has contributed greatly to my personal growth.

In the weekend trips I did throughout my stay and also during subsequent travels, I saw natural and man-made wonders I would never have been able to fathom: the Machu Picchu complex in the Andes, one of the new seven wonders of the world and the most revered temple in Incan times; Lake Titicaca, the highest navigable lake in the world and home to some of the country's most remote cultures on the Uros floating islands; and the salt flats of Uyuni, a sight

like no other on the planet. Seeing and learning about Andean culture in Peru and Bolivia made this trip an extremely rewarding one.

In addition, learning how to teach, as opposed to learning how to learn (which is what our schooling system is about, in one way or another), was an extremely useful skill to begin to acquire. I am excited, after having taught in Peru, to transfer these skills in some way into my workplace. I believe I will be better at explaining ideas to others after having had to explain so many concepts to people of all ages as part of my project.

Research for dissertation on the socio-economic conditions that led to the rise of the Islamist parties

by Aya Mazen Majzoub

Location: Egypt

Award: Christopher Vincent Travel Exhibition

Dates: 20–29 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I walked around Cairo noticing the differences in society, particularly Islamist trends, that the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood had engendered. I spoke with many Egyptians on the street, asking them about their opinions on the current government and what led them to vote (or not vote) for the Muslim Brotherhood in the last elections. I asked them what rule by an Islamist party meant for them and whether or not they supported the implementation of Sharia as public law.

I interviewed a prominent Egyptian journalist, Sarah Al-Wali, on her opinions regarding the change in regime. I asked what prompted people to vote for the Muslim Brotherhood and which socio-economic backgrounds proved to be the most and least supportive of the Islamist party.

I also interviewed an international lawyer, Mira Abdel Raouf. I asked her what an Islamist victory meant in terms of Egypt's international relations, especially concerning Israel. I also asked about her opinion on how much a change at the top has affected the lives of normal Egyptians.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

Gaining a greater understanding of Egyptian culture and standards of living was an enlightening experience. Dissatisfaction with the previous regime was so rife that the greater the shift from the old days, the better, regardless of the actual content of the change.

I enjoyed talking to the Egyptians, who were always very hospitable, friendly and chatty. Most of them were very optimistic about the future of the country, and that enthusiasm was contagious. They had a faith that I hadn't seen before. They faced their current hardships with a smile and a glass of tea, always looking forward to a better future.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Cairo is not the best place for a female to be travelling alone. The country was still in a state of transition. The police were still weak and there was general chaos. I had heard a lot about female harassment and pickpocketing. I didn't have any bad experiences, but I had to be very careful when







walking about. I avoided narrow alleys and didn't go walking around the city after the sun had gone down.

Also, people seemed very enthusiastic about the new regime. Almost too optimistic. I couldn't tell whether that enthusiasm was genuine, wishful thinking, or whether it had become a habit under the Mubarak regime to say that everything was great.

When I asked about their views regarding the Coptic Christians, everyone I spoke to called them 'our brothers' and assured me that there was absolutely no discrimination against them. That is clearly not the case.

I couldn't tell which of the information I got was true and which were only things they assumed I wanted to hear.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

I am currently writing my dissertation on the link between socio-economic conditions and rise of Islamist parties in the post-revolution Arab world. Unfortunately I couldn't go to Libya or Tunisia during that period, as the anti-Prophet Mohammad movie and the outrage it caused rendered those two countries too dangerous to visit. But visiting Egypt definitely gave me a clear insight into what drove people to support the Muslim Brotherhood, and which social classes the Brotherhood got most of its support from. I was able to link the particular grievances of the population with their voting decisions. Getting an authentic feel of the country and its people will definitely help me understand the literature more and hopefully write a more accurate dissertation.

The Seedling Project: Starting an ecological community in Vietnam

by Patrick McKearney

Location: Suoi Re, Hoa Binh Province, Vietnam

Award: Christopher Vincent Travel Exhibition

Dates: 2–30 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I am involved with a youth Buddhist organisation called Wake Up that has its origins in Vietnam (wkup.org). Through spending much time in the main monastery in France (www.plumvillage.org) I have come to be very good friends with a number of other young Europeans. Last year we all travelled throughout Vietnam visiting many of the socially engaged projects this Buddhist tradition is known for. We were so inspired that we decided to start our own. We formed an independent group called The World We Are (www.theworldweare.org) and decided to start work on trying to set up a community in rural Vietnam focused on ecological awareness, sustainable agriculture, education and mindfulness. We called this The Seedling Project: seedlingvietnam.blogspot.nl

A couple of members of our group were raised in Germany by Vietnamese parents and so are fluent

in the language. One of them went out to Germany earlier this year to try and identify a location for us to start this project. In the end she found both a place and a willing partner for our project. Vietnam's leading green architect had built a stunning community house in a village 50km from Hanoi, but needed help instituting any kind of a community there. He asked us to team up with him. We then got in touch with part of our Buddhist tradition who were based in Hanoi, many of whom were very enthusiastic to help us. And so the Seedling Project started to grow.

In September, five members of our group (myself from the UK, the others from Holland, Italy, Germany and Vietnam) travelled to Vietnam to try and take the next steps forward in this social enterprise. We did this by spending much of our time in Hanoi running workshops that enabled all the groups in the Seedling Project to come together – sharing our aspirations and thinking of practical ways of developing the project.

And in between these many workshops and meetings, we trundled out to the village where our project was actually going to be set up: Suoi Re. We spent the next 10 days there in this beautiful countryside setting, inside the majestic bamboo and mud house. At night we would rest on the hard bamboo floor, surrounded by rats, cockroaches and leeches outside – still hot from the humidity that never left, but happy to be living so simply.

During the day we would try to connect to the villagers however we could, to make sure we were







in touch with their needs and that they were fellow partners in any project we would begin here. We were astounded at how easy they made this for us. Every day they would welcome us into their homes to drink tea, eat their freshly grown food and talk about their dreams and aspirations for their village life.

As the week went on we found more and more ways to connect; I ended up playing football for the village team against local rivals. I don't think I've ever been so hot as then: struggling on just enough to set up a few goals and earn some generous comparisons with famous footballers before I collapsed shortly before half-time because of sun stroke! The villagers put it down to my whiteness, which they were generally fascinated with (whenever I had my top off people told me I was so white it looked like I was wearing a vest).

The final weekend we ran a workshop in the community house so the villagers could tell us what kind of project they wanted to work on. It was an amazing day. In the morning all the women turned up in their beautiful traditional outfits for the discussion. In the afternoon the children crammed into the house in search of entertainment and free snacks. In the evening the whole village turned up to celebrate the autumn moon festival, with performances on a ramshackle stage in the evening heat. We left feeling sad to part the company of great friends and inspiring ways of living and working together, and promising to come back.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

In our Buddhist tradition it is often said that there is no way to peace, peace is the way. In this trip we put this into practice in a number of ways that, now I look back, I realise made it such an amazing time for me.

We never compromise on the happiness, harmony and integrity of our relations. Even when there are conflicts within our small group, or with other groups, we always make sure that we prioritise reconciliation of these conflicts over getting what we want. We are clear that what we want is a strong community of committed and happy people; when you want something like this it's clear that manipulation and coercion have no place in your work. The means must be the same as the ends. Practising in this way during the trip meant there was always a chance to resolve conflicts and express difficulties, and doing this made me really happy.

We try to do the same with mindfulness too. We try to never rush, or get stressed. Instead we try to remain aware of what we are doing, dwelling happily in the present moment and proceeding calmly. When we work like this we work efficiently, harmoniously and effectively. It allows us to connect easily and joyfully with whoever we come into contact with. But this is very hard as I always have a tendency to make 'getting things done' my priority, over how I do them. It was fantastic to be part of a group that helped me train myself to slow down and trust that if the way is





mindful and joyful, then we are already realising the aim of our project in the here and now.

[What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?](#)

Practising this way of being and communicating is not always easy. Being in a group is hard and brings to light those things that are most difficult to be with in oneself. I have a very strong tendency to want to produce things fast and efficiently; many of those in our European group, and the whole of Vietnamese culture, don't seem to prioritise this way of being. Most of our group is much more laid back than me, and better at enjoying smaller, light things when we still have a lot to do. I found this particularly so when we were in Hanoi preparing to run workshops that evening. I really had a desire to produce an immaculate product and have everything organised perfectly, whereas others were much more trusting about the way it would go. I found this remarkably difficult to deal with and we needed some good reconciliation time afterwards!

The village was also in some ways the most challenging part of the project. Physically it was really very uncomfortable: humid, dirty and not particularly designed for Westerners unaccustomed to sitting on hard floors. I found this extraordinarily difficult. And yet somehow there was also something life-giving in being so aware of the body and its limitations. I felt much more connected to myself than I ever do when caught up in the busy head-work of life at Cambridge.



I've always wanted to teach myself how to live with much less, and be content with just the basics of existence. To my surprise I found this came very naturally. Though I was often annoyed to my teeth by the leeches, the cockroaches, the rats, the dirty water, the intermittent electricity and the interminable humidity – I found, strangely, that just a simple bowl of tofu, a football match on a stony pitch, singing songs with friends or any one of the multiple showers I had everyday were so much more enjoyable. By being uncomfortable I was so much more in touch with my body and the realities of life, and could just appreciate when very simple things were there.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

The project is part of a general move in my life towards exploring social entrepreneurship. I'm really excited about creating new spaces, and forging new relationships that bring the possibility of a new kind of life for people. In particular, I was really excited to do this in a setting as materially simple as a village in Vietnam.



The trip was really inspiring but still left much unresolved. The kind of community we want to create needs to be based on a solid ground of extensive research, trusting friendships and a clear plan. And so it needs time to come to fruition slowly and organically. If you would like any more information about it, would like to be involved personally, or you want to support it financially then please get in touch with us at seedlingvietnam@gmail.com

Comparing the differences between Western and Eastern educational systems

by Andy Winfield

Location: China

Award: Christopher Vincent Travel Exhibition

Dates: 1 July–1 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

My role in China was to run summer camps, which were being put on by schools right across the country. I was primarily based in Chengdu where I gave lessons giving an introduction into Western culture, and in Wuhan where I taught TOEFL English.

When not teaching, I also managed to fit in some travelling and in total visited seven different cities in China. Particular memories that will stick with me for a long time include seeing pandas in Chengdu, the Great Wall in Beijing and renting motorbikes in Guilin.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

For me, one of the most fascinating things about having the opportunity to travel to China was seeing

the differences in culture. This applied both inside and outside the classroom.

Within the classroom it was fascinating to see how a traditional Chinese classroom works, and how different this is from what we have grown accustomed to in the West. Traditionally, Chinese students are not allowed to speak unless they are spoken to, and there is a very large emphasis on both discipline and on respect.

I also highly enjoyed getting to know some of the locals. Westerners visiting China can often feel slightly alienated due to cultural differences: the spitting, the pushing in queues and the fighting for taxis can all make the Chinese seem slightly less than friendly. However, on more than one occasion I was







the recipient of great generosity from a complete stranger. At one point, a 75-year-old lady got up from the back of bus and came to help me try to lift my 28kg suitcase on to the bus.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Naturally, one of the most challenging aspects of the teaching was the language barrier. Within the classroom I learned that I could communicate more effectively by slowing the speed at which I spoke, ensuring that I spoke clearly and also by gesturing appropriately. In addition to this I became highly adept at acting out the meaning of English words, much to the amusement of the students.

Despite my best efforts at learning Chinese, I also had some issues with the language barrier when travelling. On one particular occasion I managed to inadvertently order a ticket for the coach for tomorrow (as opposed to today) and hence promptly proceeded to get kicked off the coach. On another occasion I accidentally ordered myself a standing ticket for what was to be a 29-hour train journey!

Another issue that I faced while teaching was trying to get the students to open up, and trying to get them to interact in the lessons. As mentioned above, many of the students were simply not used to being asked to engage and to take part in the lessons. Instead they were used to just being spoken to and hence it took a while to get the students feeling comfortable contributing in lessons.

In order to encourage the students to get involved I tried to create a 'safe' environment where all contributions were given praise, and were not judged as being either good or bad. In addition I also tried to develop a very close relationship with the students as I felt that once I got to know them on a personal level they would be far more receptive to engaging in the lessons.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Being able to have the experience of teaching in China has had a huge impact on me. Firstly it confirmed that I would indeed be interested in a career in teaching and has hence placed me in a great position to apply for teacher training this year.

The experience as a whole was absolutely incredible and throughout the trip I was constantly learning a huge amount about teaching and Chinese culture. By the end I could even manage to speak some (very) basic Chinese!



Thank you very much. I had an experience of a lifetime!

Musical theatre traditions in Italy

by Alex Gibson

Location: Italy

Award: Frank Hollick Fund

Dates: 21–30 June 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I visited Italy over the long vacation with the intention of engaging with its rich and continuing musical theatre tradition. Beginning in the south and travelling north, I visited Naples, Capri, Rome, Lanciano and finally Florence.

In Naples I visited Teatro San Carlo, the oldest continuously active opera house in Europe. Though not in season at the time of my visit, exploring this venue, which was home to the Neapolitan School of opera and remains an excellent example of eighteenth-century Italian theatrical design, was a brilliant experience.

A short journey by ferry to Capri offered some very different opportunities. A visit to the ruins of Tiberius' Villa Jovis (built 27 AD) and one of his infamous grottoes, Grotta Azzurra, provided access to a far more ancient part of Italian history.

Travelling north to Rome allowed me to explore many famous Italian landmarks, including the

Pantheon, the Colosseum, St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City and the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, where I attended a performance (perhaps ironically) of some British opera, Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Florence provided further opportunity to explore Italian history and culture, most memorably the incredible Duomo, outside of which a Florentine opera company performed a fantastic evening recital of highlights from Verdi's *Aida*.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

Though I set out primarily to learn more about the Italian musical theatre tradition, I most enjoyed absorbing historical and contemporary Italian culture as a whole. It introduced me to different attitudes towards the arts and historical traditions more generally, which was an eye-opening and incredibly enjoyable experience. Forced to pick one particular highlight, I would choose the visit to the Duomo in Florence. The building alone is awe-inspiring, and the outdoor opera only made the experience more memorable.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The trip went surprisingly smoothly overall, though travelling by rail proved tricky at times. Forgetting to validate tickets on the platform accrued a few fines!

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

The project has only fuelled my desire to learn more about Italian culture and European history in general. The musical and theatrical traditions of the region remain of great interest to me and I hope to continue exploring them in the future.



I'd like to thank the generosity of the College and all others involved in awarding me the Frank Hollick Fund. The opportunity to travel in the long vacation is a valuable one for any student, and I hope that these opportunities continue to be available in the future.

Florence's classical roots

by Alex MacKeith

Location: Florence

Award: Frank Hollick Fund

Dates: 9–15 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

We set out for Florence with the aim of gaining a greater understanding of Florence as a city indebted to its Roman origins in its urban composition. This process included a study of the street layout between the Duomo and the Piazza della Signoria. From the height of the Duomo's Campanile it was possible to discern the rectangular '*castrum*' formation common in so many Roman colonies. The construction of the city within its ancient walls relies on the orientation established at its Roman inception, with the four original city gates linked by two main roads. These roads in Roman Florence, the '*cardo maximus*' and '*decumanus maximus*', intersected at the point where four of the city's main roads intersect today; this specific geographical point retains its infrastructural significance.

Walking the streets around the Piazza della Signoria, it was interesting to note the gridiron which comprises the centre of Florence and know that it was inherited from Roman Florentia.

We were also able to visit the ruins of the original Roman walls that surrounded the *castrum* and view the distance by which the city outgrew them by 1172, at which point the new walls of the communal period were built. Walking from the heavily Roman centre through what became the suburbs of the *castrum* was a fascinating experience. The new walls were to a certain extent dictated by the position of the ancient walls but rotated to accommodate the far more sporadic layout of the roads approaching the city. Thus symmetry with the grid-like structure was lost and further disjunction made visible between the *castrum* at the centre of Florence and its suburbs.

We were also keen to investigate at ground level the differences between ancient Florentia and the building undertaken in the medieval period. This was evident in the number of incredibly high towers that dot the central area, inserted into the *castrum* structure as a medieval means of altering the streets' box-like structure. Indeed, the alleys that pulse like veins away from the main roads of the centre are another means by which Florence can be differentiated from the structure of Florentia, as new familial divisions arose among the cities' ruling classes.

As our main focus was on the centre of Florence, we were able to consider the debt some of its most famous architectural achievements owe to the Roman origins of the town. For instance, the aqueduct that connects the Fountain of Neptune to the springs of Valdimarina is of Roman origin; the Ponte Vecchio is a more mysterious entity, as its predecessors can be

traced back to the Roman era of the town; and the Via Cassia's crossing of the river at its narrowest point, though it was not the primary bridge over the Arno. Thus much of the project was the implementation of prior research to a city and its architecture that lay before our eyes.

[What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?](#)

Florence is a city dominated by its debt to the early Renaissance but its Roman history becomes evident when actively searched for. Much of our investigation took us through the city streets themselves, rather than passively standing in front of large monuments reading the city-sponsored panels about its history. This more actively investigative approach was really satisfying when it yielded the results we were looking for.

It was also fascinating to witness the symbiosis of two monumental forces in history, one imperial, one cultural, melded together in one city. In a way, we found the diaspora of the Roman Empire from Rome and the spread of artistic innovation from Florence oddly comparable. It was a privilege to visit a city that played so great a part in shaping art across Europe for hundreds of years to come.

[What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?](#)

The language barrier was initially daunting but our knowledge of French and Spanish meant we picked

up most important phrases for basic communication within the first few days.

[How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?](#)

So much of the time an investigation of the Roman Empire will focus solely on Rome. It was intriguing to witness the Roman infrastructure as it shaped a different city, and recognise that the underlying logic of the city centre did not belong, as might be immediately assumed, to the historical period most readily associated with Florence. To see the finest examples of Renaissance architecture superimposed upon ancient groundwork was a distinct reminder of the myriad more subtle ways in which the classical world informs and shapes the modern. The inert rocky ruins of the Colosseum, of the Acropolis, are certainly magnificent monuments. But they are sectioned off as historical artefacts, as objects to be observed rather than phenomena to be experienced. It was amazing to witness first-hand a city that had grown out of its classical foundations, rather than seeing them levelled and laid over with certain parts artificially preserved and sectioned off as 'historical documents'. Though the Renaissance redefined Florence, it did not occlude its earlier imperial history. Its debt to the classical world only needed to be sought in the right way.

Just as the classical world informed Renaissance Florence structurally, it also informed it culturally. Just as the older lines of the city could be identified when looked for, so the classical world is omnipresent in the wealth of Renaissance artwork for which the city

is now famous. Its endurance is palpable in Botticelli's peculiar fusion of Christian imagery with Greek gods, the golden ratio so integral to Renaissance architecture, and the lost-wax method of sculpting. In short, the project was a hands-on experience of the pervasive influence of the classical world.

In terms of personal development, there is nothing quite like being given the chance to travel independently to a location of your choosing at an age when, because of the financial burden of flights, transport, accommodation and living costs, many young people are restricted to travelling only when their families do, or not at all. I had wanted to visit Florence for a long time before the opportunity finally arose and we put a lot of preparation into the project before we set out. This meant there wasn't a day wasted and we experienced what the city had to offer to the full. It was a moving and striking thing to witness some of the greatest works of art in the Western world in the flesh. I am hugely grateful to St John's and the Travel Grant Committee for their support in this project.

Whistler and the East: Dissertation research

by Louise Paterson

Location: Washington, DC

Award: Frank Hollick Fund

Dates: 5–13 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I have chosen to write my undergraduate dissertation on the American nineteenth-century painter and designer James Abbot McNeill Whistler. Therefore, I spent a week this summer in Washington, DC, making use of the extensive collections of art and related documents held by the Smithsonian Institution, specifically those in the Freer Gallery of Art. Charles Freer was a personal friend of Whistler, and he purchased a vast number (over 1,300) of his works, now on display in the gallery or accessible to students on request. Among this collection is the interior of The Peacock Room, a dining room designed by Whistler and recognised as a masterpiece of nineteenth-century interior design, as well as important early works, landscapes and swagger portraits.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

It was a wonderful experience to study in one of the most expansive art collections in the world, and carry out my research alongside those whose investigations and publications are of international importance.

Less directly, the sense of a national collection of art that has been gathered and organised within such a relatively small and local complex is fascinating, especially given the common controversies surrounding the rightful ownership of ancient and foreign art, which are also highly relevant in Britain today. Furthermore, during my trip I was able to explore most of the Smithsonian complex, and see universally significant works by artists from Albrecht Dürer and Jan Vermeer to Gerhard Richter and Ai Weiwei.



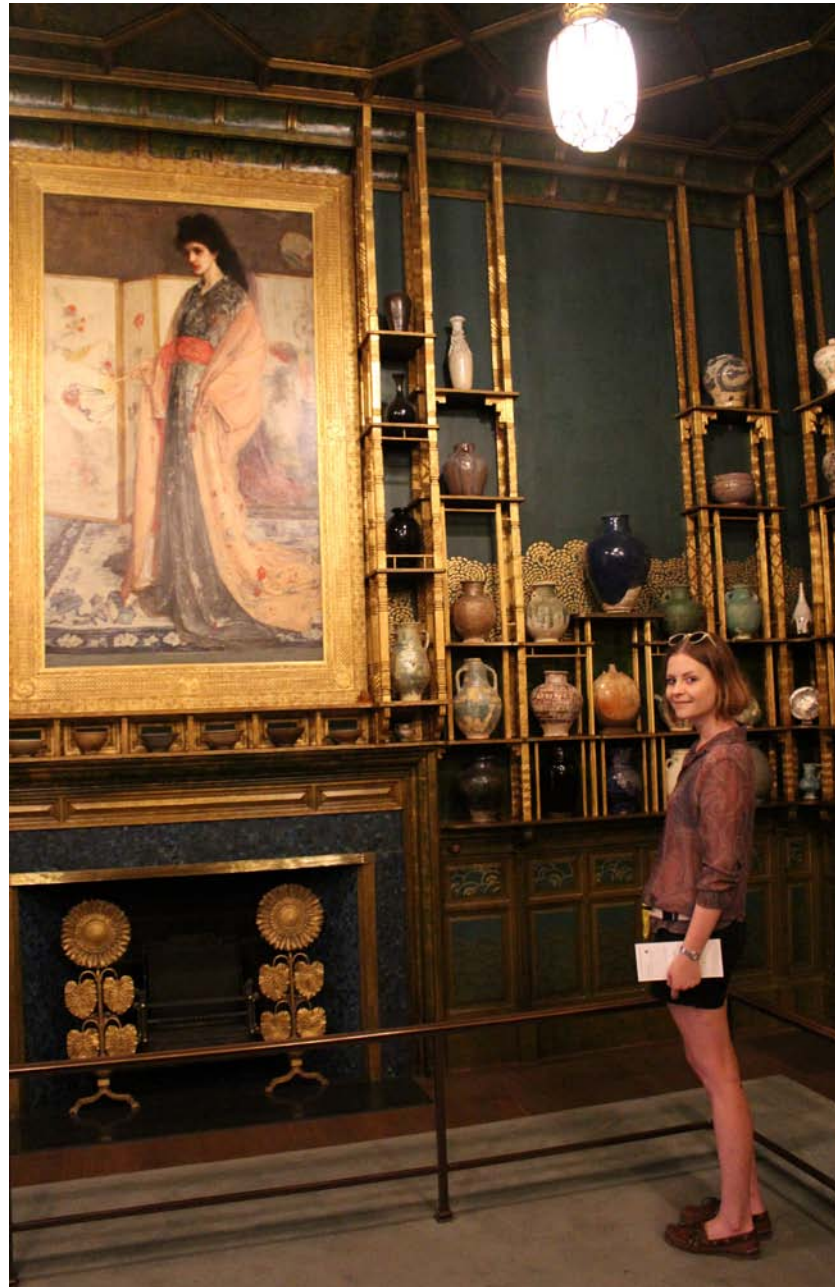


What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Any student of art history would be overwhelmed by the volume and quality of art held in the Smithsonian collections, and I hope that when accessing primary documents and source materials I was focused and disciplined enough to enable the development of an insightful and original line of argument in my dissertation. Otherwise, I was very fortunate that the Smithsonian Institution strongly encourages and facilitates the private study of their collections, so gaining access to priceless works and invaluable information was relatively straightforward.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Glasgow University displays, in its Hunterian Gallery, another sizeable collection of Whistler's work, but, owing to the posthumous nature of the Glasgow bequest, not all stages and themes of the artist's career are adequately represented. I relished the opportunity to improve my understanding of Whistler's work and its legacy from a more representative collection. The Washington museums also hold far better collections of the work of Whistler's contemporaries, including John Singer Sargent, John Twachtman and Winslow Homer, than are open to the public anywhere in Europe.



Early Renaissance architecture

by Anna Reid

Location: Florence

Award: Frank Hollick Fund

Dates: September 2012

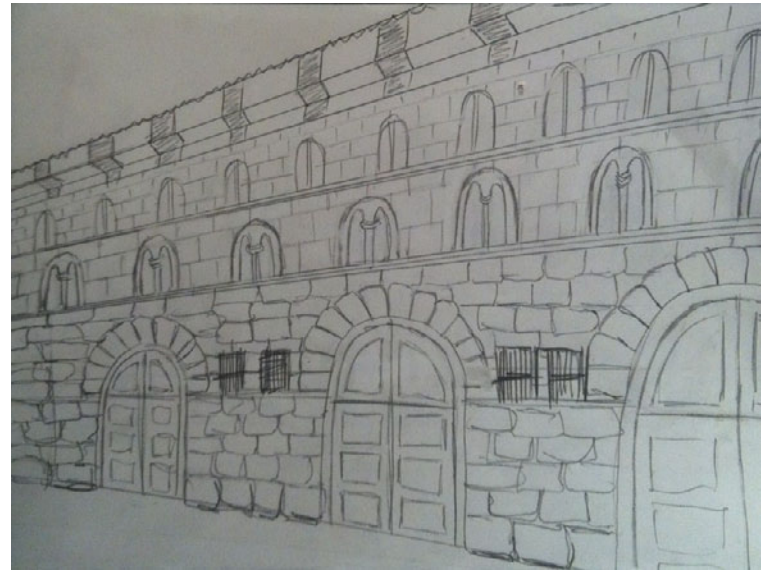
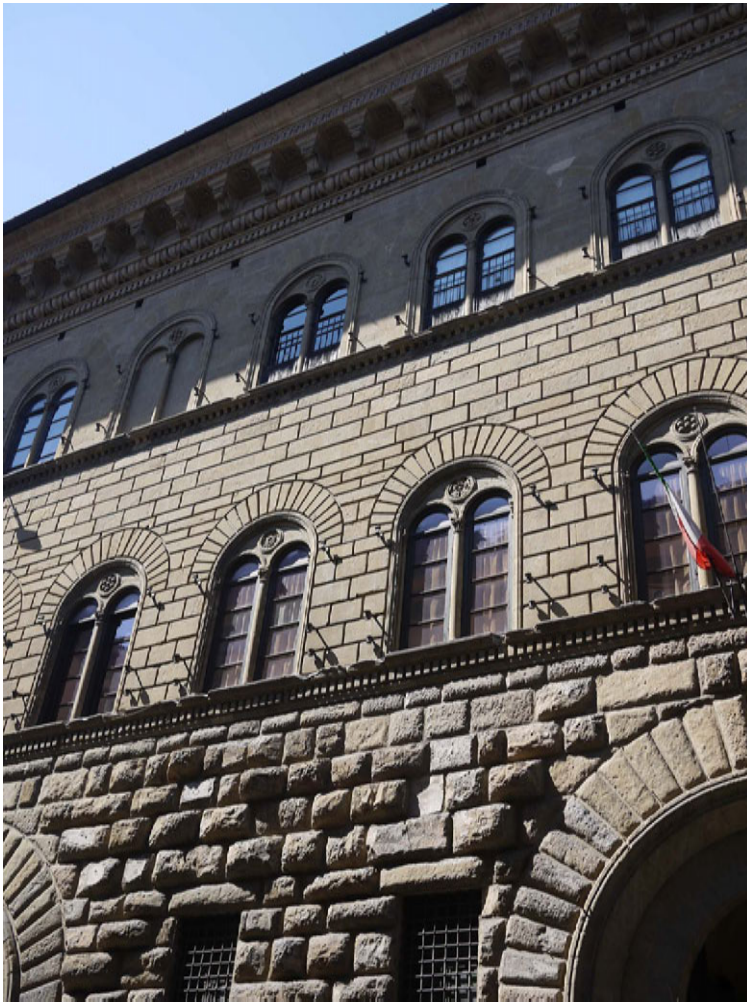
Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

My boyfriend and I each had separate interests in Florence as a city: his were more based around its Roman roots, mine around the flourishing of architectural and artistic styles that were later identified as 'early Renaissance'. Our interest coincided in the strong elements of neo-classicism exhibited in early Renaissance architecture and artwork, and we visited a number of emblematic sites and museums. There we would discuss the elements we recognised as characteristic of the Florentine take on classical architecture: line, form and structure. I took a number of detailed photographs and Impressionist sketches. These sketches were not to accurately depict the buildings, but to attempt to communicate the experience of seeing them from the point of view of a pedestrian, the very perspective that a number of the buildings were specifically designed for.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?



Exploring the city on foot was one of the things I enjoyed most. Though there are any number of photographs available online (indeed, it was solely through online resources that my original study of Renaissance architecture at AS level History of Art



Left and above: The Palazzo Medici

had been enabled), there is nothing quite like seeing these astonishing buildings in the flesh. There is a monumentality and an elegance to their structure and design that cannot be captured by schematic diagrams or aerial photographs. The strong interest in

humanism shared by most artists of the early Renaissance means that a number of the buildings are designed to be seen not from the air or in schematics, but by the ordinary person on foot, in their own city. The Palazzo Medici for example, which we had the privilege of walking past every day, employs a technique called 'rustication' on its ground floor, as opposed to the smoother masonry on the top floor. The diminishing heights of the three levels and the graduated smoothing of the masonry as each floor ascends was intended to create an impression of impenetrability and strength on the lower floor (to deter thieves and also to inspire fear and awe amongst the general populace). The finesse and elegance on the upper floors was intended to remind the general



Left and above: Santa Maria Novella

public that the nobility who lived there were great patrons of the arts and lived lives of elegance and beauty.

Santa Maria Novella is another ideal example of early Renaissance techniques. The classical facade, composed of bright white and green marble, is tacked on to the old red brick structure of the rest of the church in a way that seems wholly incongruous (aesthetically and ideologically) to a modern viewer. It is, however, a perfect example of a city undergoing a period of immense aesthetic and ideological flux. Instead of rebuilding popular sites in a neo-classical fashion (this would have been financially impossible), the exteriors were merely adapted through the use of facades. Not only does this

exemplify the precarious balance between artistic ambition and the financial and social strictures of fifteenth century Florence (most strongly exhibited in the pressures of patronage), it also exemplifies the peculiarly conglomerate nature of early Renaissance aesthetics and thought. Bits of the classical world were 'borrowed' when appropriate, but had to be combined with a contemporary Christian outlook – a conglomeration that Alex and I found was encapsulated in the paintings of Botticelli with their bizarre combinations of pagan and Christian imagery.

[What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?](#)

The language barrier was a little difficult at first but we managed to muddle through with Alex's knowledge of French and mine of Spanish.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

The draw in this project for me lay in re-engaging with an interest I had had to put to one side in order to focus on my degree. The experience did not disappoint and it was fascinating to be able to engage with these works (which I had only ever studied as a high school student unfamiliar with the classical world) with a classicist to discuss theories and bounce ideas off of. The privilege of seeing some of the greatest architecture and artwork in Western Europe in person was startling and I am determined to take up my study of art history again now that the majority of my reading is no longer occupied with weekly essays.

I also found that between my interest in early Renaissance architecture and my engagement with Jameson's 'Postmodernism' at university, I discovered an interest in architecture as a communicative and descriptive medium: writing the discourse of a period's social, political and economic concerns upon the urban landscape; layering on top of, adapting and altering the evidence of previous discourses. For this reason I have started reading further into urban architectural theory starting with Venturi and Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas*. I am thinking of branching out into Le Corbusier's theory and maybe dipping into Frampton's critical history as well.



Appreciation of Italian architecture

by Bhupinder Singh Sachdev

Location: Italy

Award: Frank Hollick Fund

Dates: 21 June–6 July 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I undertook this project to develop an interest in architecture, and Italy seemed to be the perfect destination due to its significance in this field and



the countless sites to visit. We decided to get a broad overview and visited a number of cities in order to witness distinct styles and also to get an idea of how things have changed over the centuries. We were certainly not disappointed – Italian architecture is a gift to the world.

We started our journey in Naples, where we saw the Castel Nuovo. The Triumphal Arch, an example of early Renaissance architecture, and the formidable towers make this the highlight of the city. The Galleria Umberto I offered a more modern structure, and with the glass, marble and spaciousness, it was a contrast to the rest of the city.

Next, we went to Rome. It was incredible to see all the ancient Roman structures that have lasted for 2,000 years. The Colosseum has to be one of the most impressive buildings I have ever seen. The influence of Greek architecture is evident here, with regards to the use of columns (Doric at the bottom, then Ionic and then Corinthian at the top). The use of the arch and the dome, which have a lasting significance in architecture, were clear in Rome as well. There are arches that run along the perimeter of the Colosseum and there is a magnificent dome in Hadrian's Pantheon.

Following this, we spent a couple of days in Lanciano. This was a special part of the trip, as unlike the rest of the trip that was spent in famous cities, we also got the opportunity to look at a small Italian town that is off the tourist track. While we did walk through some ancient ruins, I appreciated the walks through





the city centre and residential districts, where I got to look at the houses and buildings that have been untouched for a long time.

Florence represents possibly the most important city in Italy culturally, and the obvious highlight was the Santa Maria del Fiore. This was the perfect place to see Renaissance architecture, and the massive brick dome of this cathedral commissioned by Brunelleschi was the perfect example. The facade of pink, green and white marble is also a sight to behold. The intricate detail of the design and statues of the facade are truly impressive.

We were based in Padova for a few days and we visited a number of churches and museums. For instance, we went to the Scrovegni Chapel and the Basilica of St Anthony. I found the Palazzo della Ragione very interesting, with its roof designed as an inverted ship.



Venice was of course a brilliant way to end our trip. The couple of days here gave us the chance to explore this unique city. The Renaissance was late to arrive in Venice and Gothic architecture endured, because it was more connected to the east and north. The Gothic style was developed when the city was at the peak of its power. The Doge's Palace incorporates this style. It also encompasses eastern influences, as does the Basilica of San Marco, which bears some resemblance to churches and mosques from the Middle East.



The cities we visited were all distinct and had different architectural styles from different periods. Nevertheless, they were all beautiful.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

The entire trip was very enjoyable, but in particular, I appreciated being able to see a wide range of cities and buildings.

Rome was a special city in that we were able to see structures that have stood since the Roman empire. There are some defining aspects of the architecture, like the dome and the arches, that have influenced generations. It is also apparent that public buildings had the purpose of being impressive and often serving religious needs.

I also thoroughly enjoyed Venice because of how unique it is. It is amazing that the entire city is built on stilts around canals and some of the buildings and bridges are well and truly impressive.

Of course, in addition to everything we saw, I have to say that the food was incredible. The pizza was delicious, and in the summer heat, sampling a few flavours of *gelato* a day was delightful.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

I think it is fair to say that the journey took place without too much difficulty. It would have been troublesome getting around the country without

speaking the language, but thankfully, I had two Italian friends with me. They were even kind enough to equip me with a few phrases. We were perhaps a bit too ambitious in wanting to see so many places and as a result it was a challenge planning the itinerary in order to achieve all that we had set out to do.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

I have no doubt that this project has assisted me greatly. It has essentially helped me in an interdisciplinary way. Most importantly, I received a first-hand introduction to Italian architecture, which was the primary aim of this project. But in addition to this, I saw landmarks that are significant in other fields. For instance, we spent a day in Verona at the end of our trip, which was the site of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and we visited the Monumento Nazionale a Vittorio Emanuele II in Rome that was built to honour the king that unified Italy in the 1800s. I also saw how tourism and culture are important to the Italian economy, from the dozens of American tourists admiring the Renaissance architecture in Florence and the long queues at the Colosseum, to the sold out operas and rows of shops hopeful of selling Venetian masks to tourists.



It was a wonderful trip and I am very grateful to the College and the Frank Hollick Fund for giving me this opportunity.

Travelling to improve knowledge of raptor ecology, education, and training

by Deanie Vallone

Location: Sligo, Ireland

Award: Frank Hollick Fund

Dates: 6–21 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I spent two weeks working at Eagles Flying: the Irish Raptor Research Centre. The centre, located in north-west Ireland, houses over 350 birds and animals, most of which are raptors (eagles, owls, hawks, and falcons). In addition to being a sanctuary, the centre is also a wildlife hospital, a rehabilitation centre and a breeding centre. They also do tours and flight shows for the public. Before moving to England I had worked at a small raptor centre in my hometown for three years, mainly focusing on raptor training and public education. Eagles Flying took me on for a two-week internship to let me experience the workings of a larger centre. My main responsibilities revolved around general raptor husbandry (lots of cleaning, food preparation, feeding and handling of birds). I worked with other trainers to flight-train birds for the show, but my biggest responsibility was personally





flight-training two young barn owls hatched at the sanctuary.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

Coming from my small centre back home, I loved that I was able to work with a wider variety of birds, some of which I had never even seen before. Observing the way in which the centre was run really proved to be an eye-opening experience. During the show, the trainers would have birds land on audience members' hands and people in the audience were even allowed to touch the birds. This is something we never did at my centre, the differences being dictated by state regulations and personal training techniques. Eagles Flying really advocated the idea that these animals are not inherently aggressive, and I think their approach really made visitors more appreciative and respectful of the birds. My favourite experience at the centre was training the two young barn owls, Benjamin and Beth. My job was to train them to fly to me for food, and on Day 1 neither of them flew to me. But I persisted, and at the end of my two weeks they were calling to me for food as soon as I walked in the mew (cage), and flew to me consistently. Since I was the only one working with them, I spent a lot of time handling them, walking them around the centre, sitting with them in their mew, and, of course, feeding them. It was really interesting watching the progression over the two weeks as they got used to my presence. By the time I left they were so comfortable with me they would perch on my shoulder and let me touch their feathers, something raptors rarely allow.



What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The workload proved to be the most challenging aspect of the project. We worked every day from 8am to around 9pm, and the work was almost non-stop.

I didn't mind the physical aspect of it, in fact, it was absolutely wonderful getting away from a desk and getting my hands dirty, but after a while you do get a bit tired. On top of this, we did the same exact tasks every single day. Every day the same mews needed to be cleaned, every day the same food needed to be prepared. The repetition made every day feel a bit like *dāja vu*, but it really opened my eyes to how much work goes into running a centre like this. Animals don't take a day off, and so neither could the centre. We only had an average of six workers a day, as well, and the small staff meant everyone had to pull their weight. It was a lot of work, but at least it was rewarding.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Since I'm studying English literature, raptor education doesn't seem to fit in neatly. But I really benefited from this experience in two major ways. First of all, I'm hoping to continue working with raptors the rest of my life, even if it's not a career choice. This experience helped me see raptor training in a new way, and I will bring the lessons I learned back with me to my centre in America. Secondly, I'm a writer, and my experience at Eagles Flying was a very sensory, very visceral one. I scribbled down a handful of poems and short stories at night and during my breaks. I'm hoping to revise some of the pieces over the next couple of months and see if I have any gems amongst them. Overall, the internship just confirmed my desire to keep the natural world in my life. I love working and studying at university, but it



reminded me that it's so crucial to get yourself out of the house, out into nature. Most specifically I found how necessary it is to educate the rest of the world about the importance of conserving and respecting nature. If we don't do it, no one will.



I would like to thank St John's College, my wonderful donor(s) and everyone at Eagles Flying for making this such a beautiful and rewarding experience.

Tour of Rome's historical sites

by Kweku Abraham

Location: Rome

Award: Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund

Dates: July 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I spent a week at the beginning of July with several fellow Johnians in Rome. There, I was able to visit sites I had learnt about whilst studying Italian Unification as an A-level history module. These included; the Janiculum, a fortress and now park, where Giuseppe Garibaldi defended the Roman Republic against French Catholics seeking to return a reactionary pope to his throne in 1849; the grave of Victor Emmanuel II, first king of a unified Italy, in the Pantheon; and the majestic Altar of the Nation commemorating this feat. I also saw some of the most well-known Roman remains, at the Colosseum, the fora and Ostia Antica.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I really enjoyed having the opportunity to learn about an era of history I had already studied from an Italian perspective. For example, seeing the much more positive attitude in Italy, compared to textbooks here, towards the king of Piedmont who refused to

become Victor Emmanuel the first of Italy but chose instead to emphasise his own region's dominance of the new Italy by remaining Victor Emmanuel II. Seeing remnants (sometimes wonderfully preserved) of architecture thousands of years old in such abundance that tourists were allowed to sit and eat their lunch on them never ceased to fill me with wonder.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Visiting Rome in July rather than, say, September, was – as everyone who has done so will tell you – a mistake. Finding the energy to traipse around outdoor archaeological sites when the heat made you drowsy and grumpy was really tough!

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Studying Maths, this trip predictably did little to help with my subject-related learning. However, to deem the trip useless because of this fact would be very short-sighted. Roman influence was so critical in the development of the Western world that visiting the capital of the empire can provide a real insight into an era when Italy dominated the known world. At the house – in Rome – where Keats died, boards inform you of the trip to visit the classical sites that every gentleman in Keats' time was expected to make to round off his education. While this is no longer seen as so critical, the importance of this region means it continues to hold fascination today.



I am really grateful to the Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund for providing funding to enable me to go on this trip even though it bore effectively no relevance to my degree. Without the grant provided, I would have felt unable to afford a visit that broadened my education, so I am very appreciative.

Historical sites of Rome

by Anna Dougherty

Location: Rome

Award: Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund

Dates: 27 June–4 July 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Our trip involved exploring the sights of Rome and discovering the city's changing faces, from the Medieval heart of Christianity to the centre of an ancient empire to a modern European capital.

We visited archaeological sites such as Ostia Antica, the port of ancient Rome. In addition we saw the Colosseum and Roman and Imperial fora near the Palatine Hill. The Pantheon in particular highlighted the juxtaposition of Rome's history – a pagan temple converted in 609 into a Christian church by Pope Boniface IV, which still serves as a place of worship today.

We were also able to enjoy Rome's religious heritage. We visited Vatican City, taking in both St Peter's Basilica and the Vatican Museums, including the Sistine Chapel. We also had the opportunity to visit a number of other celebrated churches. Of particular note is San Giovanni in Laterano, which was the first church built in Rome and was formally the papal seat. We also visited the nearby Santa Scala,

which is said to be the staircase to Pontius Pilate's house that Jesus ascended to face his trial.

In addition we had the opportunity to enjoy the wonderful architecture and sculpture on display all across the city. In particular, we saw the Piazza Navona and its central fountain by Bernini, the Trevi Fountain and the Spanish Steps. While at the Spanish Steps we visited the nearby Keats-Shelley museum, which gave a fascinating insight into the Rome known by the English romance poets.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

One of the things I enjoyed most was simply walking around the city. It seemed so full of ancient sites and lovely vistas that even walking to dinner you were bound to stumble across something beautiful. It was like walking around a film set.

I also really enjoyed having the opportunity to travel with a group of other John's students.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

It seems churlish to say we had any real challenges while enjoying a week's holiday in Italy. However it was quite hot when we visited and it made visiting some of the outdoor archaeological sites slightly uncomfortable. We also had some difficulties initially with the metro system but once one of our group spotted that the information boards were displaying

the trains' origins not their destinations we found getting about much easier!

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

The trip has benefited my studies by greatly improving my understanding of ancient Roman life and society, which has helped me better contextualise the development of Roman law in response to changing cultural pressures.

In a personal respect the trip has furthered my understanding of other cultures, both ancient and modern. I greatly enjoyed travelling with my fellow Johnians, working as a team to plan our trip and overcome difficulties.



The trip was a wonderful experience and I am hugely grateful to the College and to the Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund for making it possible. I would also like to particularly thank two of my travelling companions, Matt and Rebecca, who undertook the majority of the planning and organisation involved in the trip.

Sicily: A cultural, historical and natural perspective

by Terry Farrelly

Location: Sicily

Award: Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund

Dates: 3–14 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Our visit to Sicily involved quite a lot of travelling but was highly rewarding. For example, we got to sit in an ancient Greek theatre where people would have come together over two thousand years ago to watch dramas and comedies. We also got to discover the modern culture of the island, which is surprisingly different to our own.

The trip started on 3 September when we landed in Catania. First, we visited Castle Ursino, a thirteenth-century castle originally built by the coast. A volcanic eruption in 1669 buried the lower part of the castle and also created a new coastline much farther out, which meant the castle was no longer effective as a form of coastal defence. Later we went to a remarkable museum dedicated to the invasion of Sicily by the Allies during World War II. In Catania, there were also two ancient theatres, which we visited, one Roman and one built by the Greeks but later modified by the Romans.

From Catania we took a bus to Agrigento, which is a nice town on a hill beside the sea on the south coast of the island. Being based in Agrigento allowed us to visit the nearby valley of the temples, where we saw two magnificent ancient Greek temples, as well as the ruins of the gigantic temple of Zeus.

After Agrigento we travelled by train to Palermo, which, being bigger than Agrigento, felt more like a city. From Palermo we made a day trip to Segesta, where we saw a wonderfully preserved Greek temple as well as a Greek theatre, both in a beautiful rural setting.

Our next stop was Taormina, a town that attracted a crowd of tourists because of a famous Greek theatre, which had a stunning view of the Mediterranean and Mount Etna.

Then we travelled by train to Syracuse. Here we explored catacombs and quarries where Athenian prisoners were kept after being defeated by the Syracusans in 413 BC.

Our final stop was Catania again. Before leaving for home, we went on a tour of Mount Etna, known locally as 'the Lady'. The weather on the mountain was quite rough though not terribly cold, the wind was extremely strong and made visiting some of the craters difficult. The next day we left Sicily for England.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

There are a few things that stand out from our trip. One was seeing the rural parts of the island, particularly while at Segesta. Syracuse was also a highlight: there was a vibrant local food market (where I picked up some Sicilian oranges). Also, while in Syracuse, we went swimming in the sea early in the morning where the locals would swim in beautiful, clear water. It was also in Syracuse that Archimedes invented burning glasses to help fight off the invading Roman ships. Standing in the same harbour where such an extraordinary historical event occurred was amazing. Similarly, sitting in the Greco-Roman theatre in Catania was probably my favourite part of the trip. I think this was because of the surreal atmosphere created by the contrast between the ancient theatre and the modern city.

[What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?](#)

There weren't many difficulties during the trip. Really, the biggest obstacle was the heat, but a healthy amount of ice cream helped with that.

[How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?](#)

While the experience was very interesting, because of all the wonderful historical ruins and the natural beauty of the island, there was also a cultural aspect to the trip. In particular, the contrast between Sicilian life and Irish/British life was a little surprising. For one thing, with the exception of one or two clubs

in Palermo, I don't remember noticing any nightclubs. In Sicily, there isn't the same drinking culture that there is in Ireland and the United Kingdom. There they typically drink wine with meals, but in the evening people meet at cafes to socialise. It was interesting to see such a different culture that was still so close in other ways to our own.

Another thing we noticed was that Sicily is much poorer than you would expect, given that it's part of Italy, which is a very wealthy country. It made me realise how much needs to be done, even in Europe, to improve a lot of people's living standards.



I would like to acknowledge the support of St John's and the Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund. Their generosity made this wonderful trip possible.

A tour of historical sites in Rome

by Matthew Huxtable

Location: Rome, Italy

Award: Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund

Dates: June 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I spent a week in June – just after the end of Easter Term 2012 – with a group of four other Johnians staying in Rome, Italy, in an apartment that bordered the Vatican. We spent our time touring the many renowned sites and monuments that are spread all across Rome, immersing ourselves in the Italian experience and uttering the few words of Italian that I know when it was possible to do so! I very much enjoyed the time spent touring the Vatican. It is quite surreal that this landlocked state exists inside Rome as a completely separate and independent country. Yet stepping inside the great walls of Vatican City, the architecture and grandeur of the buildings and the gardens makes for a fantastic trip back in time. I would have liked to have spent more time exploring the Vatican in more detail, but unfortunately, we had to squeeze a lot of visiting into a particularly short space of time! I did manage to find the time to climb to the top of the Basilica, though, which gave a very impressive view across the city skyline and seemed to go on for miles. No, I did not use the lift! I climbed all the stairs, and can definitely say I have

had the experience of having to walk at a slant near the top, where the walls start to curve and make walking particularly uncomfortable! In addition, I also enjoyed the visit to the Colosseum. Although this structure has been subject to the course of time and has weathered somewhat, it was still fantastic to see a building that brought such joy and entertainment to so many people (even though it is large, an audience of 50,000 does not seem possible). It is very easy to see examples of strict division by social class in its construction, not to mention the deep thought and consideration the designers gave to just about every aspect of putting on a performance – it would seem nothing was too big or difficult, and that they could solve any problem if they needed to. I'll never forget my first sighting on leaving the metro station – it's very impressive!

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

It is particularly inspiring to just have the opportunity to visit a city with such a legacy – built and occupied by people thousands of years ago, which went on to have such a huge impact over the course of time. I have not studied History for many years, so this trip gave me the opportunity to access first-hand experiences to reinforce what I have learnt about in the past. I feel the ability to actually see (and touch) brings the topic to life, and combined with true Italian summer weather it puts you in the shoes of early Romans, for a more realistic experience!

I particularly enjoyed the food, and I was surprised by how much variety was actually available for very reasonable prices. I was expecting a big emphasis on pizza and pasta, which was the case, but I never realised true Italian pizza is so radically different to the food we call pizza at home! We managed to avoid most of the restaurants that were obviously aimed at tourists, and found a lovely restaurant with a good menu and very nice staff just a few minutes' walk from our apartment, where we returned on a couple of occasions.

However, a week-long trip for five people is not something that just happens. We had to travel five people from various parts of the UK, making three separate flights from different airports that all arrived into Rome at the same time. We had to make sure the schedules lined up. I definitely enjoyed organising everyone's travel itineraries, which I believe came together without any problems!

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Without a doubt, the first challenge was the heat. Although the temperature was not actually as high as other places I have visited, the nature of the trip meant we spent a considerable amount of time outside, such as in ancient ruins with very little shade, during the middle of the day when the sun was at its highest. Travelling so far south at any point in the summer is always going to be a physical and mental test of endurance! However, I do feel it brought the trip to life more, allowing me to empathise with those

who lived in these places before modern luxuries such as air conditioning, mass transit systems, tap water on demand and chillers to keep it cool. In some respects, the heat is not a problem when you know there is a cooler place to return to at the end of the day.

We also found some of the public transport particularly 'interesting'. We did not use the bus services – as with most of Europe, these aren't always reliable. However, the trains were very convenient and allowed us to access all the attractions with little effort. We quickly picked up the system, but also accidentally discovered the Italians like to change the platforms at a moment's notice. The changes were always made clear by announcements of the change... in Italian. At one point, we ran between three platforms, almost catching a train that changed destinations to go to the airport, and then finally catching the train we needed to get back to our apartment. After boarding, we discovered it was more luxurious than the others – which is when we discovered it was a long-distance train to Pisa. It didn't stop at any of the next stations where our normal train would stop. Was it a non-stop service? Fortunately, the station nearest our apartment was a major station. It stopped there and we got off. Still, this was an interesting and nerve-racking 10 minutes – and a situation I would find very difficult to explain in Italian to an Italian train conductor!

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

It is hard to relate a historical trip to Italy to a course in Computer Science. There are very few topics in the development of theoretical or practical Computer Science that are related to ancient Rome, and certainly none that I can think of at present. This trip was not necessarily related to my studies, but being a visit to a place with so much history it was certainly still very academic in nature. It allowed me to explore a very famous historical site (even if it is a very large site!) and see sights that are so renowned for being connected with the development of the world as we know it today. I am thoroughly thankful for the experience, and for the travel award for assisting with the financial side of the matter along the way.

A tour of Rome's historical sites

by John Lindsay

Location: United Kingdom

Award: Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund

Dates: June–July 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Rome has many attractions for a history student, and as a group we managed to visit some of the most famous sites, as well as gaining an appreciation of the city itself. We ventured outside the city on our first day to see the ruins at Ostia Antica, which were fascinating, and many of the buildings were very well preserved, helping to give a sense of the scale, which can be hard to conceive from books. Similarly, despite it being one of the world's most iconic buildings, the Colosseum still astounded as a feat of architecture and engineering, as did the Altar of the Nation, built after Italian unification in the nineteenth century. Having studied the unification last year I found it very interesting to see some of the sites I had read about, particularly the Janiculum, now a park with a museum, where Garibaldi led forces seeking to preserve the Italian Republic in 1849.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I had seen the majority of the sites we visited in photographs prior to our visit, but I found that being there in person gave me an additional perspective, and made me appreciate the extent of the achievements of the Romans and Christians. In the latter case, visiting St Peter's allowed me to appreciate its brilliance, which I had been told of before, but never really considered for myself. That said, I personally preferred some of the smaller churches we visited, perhaps because of the sense of discovery rather than affirmation. Over the course of the week I found I had not lost my child-like excitement for seeing places that I had read about in books, but also enjoyed visiting buildings I was unaware of, such as the museum at the apartment where John Keats died, which led to me re-read some of his work, as well as that of other romantic poets.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Other than some incidents at stations where we were confused by the presence of arrivals boards, as well as departures ones and when we mistakenly boarded a train that just sat at the station for half an hour, our trip wasn't too challenging. We managed to reduce the effects of the heat by carrying several bottles of frozen water around with us, and our activities were interesting enough to distract me for most of the time. I would definitely recommend visiting Rome when it is cooler though, mainly because of the queuing, which wasn't so pleasant.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

From an academic perspective, visiting the Janiculum and tomb of Victor Emmanuel in the Colosseum helped to reinforce what I had learnt, and whilst visiting some of the more ostentatious churches I gained an unexpected appreciation of why many people throughout history have opposed the church's wealth. I enjoyed the experience of travelling too, having only briefly ventured beyond France before, and whilst Rome is not a particularly challenging city in which to stay, I would now feel more confident about travelling in a small group, or even alone, in future. Without the generosity of the College, and in my case the Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund, we would not have visited Rome, so I would like to thank them for contributing towards an enthralling and enriching experience.

Sicily: A natural, cultural and historical perspective

by Sean Ryan

Location: Sicily

Award: Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund

Dates: 3–14 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Our trip to Sicily focused heavily on travel and exploring the culture and heritage of this historic part of the Mediterranean.

On 3 September we landed in Catania. After arriving at our hostel, a stone's throw away from Castello Ursino, our intentions to immediately go out and begin exploring the city were hampered, as the effect of a 3am bus ride to Heathrow to catch our flight earlier that morning finally caught up with us. Sleep came early at the respectable hour of 7pm.

We spent the following two days exploring Catania by foot; a tiring activity given the thirty degree heat. We visited Castello Ursino, built in the thirteenth century by Emperor Frederick II of Sicily, which now houses the Catania Civico Museum containing a large number of classical artefacts found during excavations of classical sites in Sicily.

We also visited the Museo Storico dello Sbarco in Sicilia 1943, the largest war museum in Italy dedicated to telling the story of Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily during World War II.

The classical ruins in Catania were also a highlight of our stay. We visited the Roman amphitheatre and the Greek theatre, the ruins of which are embedded in the busy hustle and bustle of the modern day city.

From Catania we took a bus to Agrigento, an ancient Greek settlement (formally known as Akragas) founded on the southern coast of the island circa 580 BC and home to the great Greek philosopher, Empedocles. The site is home to an astonishing temple complex built in the Doric style. The highlights of the visit were certainly the Temple of Concordia and the Temple of Zeus. Concordia stands in a fantastic state of preservation – a rare example that gives the visitor a true sense of how the classical Greek temples looked during the Hellenistic era. No wonder the famous advice: if you want to view and learn about Greek temples, go to Sicily!

Having visited the Acropolis in Athens and gauged the magnificence of the Parthenon, I was still in shock at the size of the Temple of Zeus. Built to celebrate victory at the Battle of Himera (480 BC) the dimensions of the temple are truly awesome! The largest Doric temple ever built in the Mediterranean, it was unfortunately never finished and all that remain are the foundations and the outline of the temple, as well as some of the massive Atlases.

From Agrigento we travelled by train to Palermo. We spent a day walking around the city and also took a day trip to Segesta, an ancient site that has been occupied from classical to medieval times. At Segesta can be found another of Sicily's wonderfully preserved Doric-style temples. Although built by the Elymians, a Sicilian people not of Greek origin, the temple demonstrates the inescapable influence of the Greeks throughout the Mediterranean. Although not as great as the Temple of Zeus in Agrigento, the temple at Segesta also demonstrates the valiant dedication of ancient peoples to audacious building projects to honour their gods.

A twenty-minute walk from the temple, one can find a magnificent Greek-style theatre with an awe-inspiring view of the plain outstretched below.

It was in fact the people of Segesta who, being at war with Selinus, requested military aid from Athens during the Peloponnesian War. The Athenian response led to their disastrous Sicilian campaign in 415 BC during which the Athenian force was completely wiped out at the hands of the Syracusians and Spartans.

From Palermo we travelled along the coast to Taormina, the site of an amazingly situated Greek theatre, which was later altered by the Romans. The theatre stands 214 metres above sea level with a spectacular view of Mount Etna. Unfortunately Etna was obscured by haze on the day of our visit.

The last destination of our own Sicilian expedition was the historic city of Syracuse, home of the legendary Archimedes. Upon entering Syracuse we were surprised by the upkeep of the city. Whereas Catania and Palermo were rather dirty and loud, Syracuse was surprisingly clean and uncluttered. The harbour water was light blue and full of fish, with teenagers playing a version of water polo in kayaks.

The first ruin we visited in the city was the temple dedicated to Apollo, the earliest example of classical architecture in Sicily. We also visited the catacombs of the city, the largest catacomb complex in Europe outside of Rome. The catacombs were used as bomb shelters by the inhabitants of the city during World War II. By far the highlight of Syracuse was the archaeological park located on the outskirts of the city. Here we visited the Greek theatre, the largest theatre in Sicily. Adjacent to the theatre was a complex of stone quarries where it is believed the Syracusians kept the Athenian prisoners of war following the Athenian Expedition. Hot and dry in the summer, cold and damp in the winter, the prison must have been hell on earth for the Athenians – none are believed to have survived. Unfortunately we didn't have time to venture out to nearby Belvedere, where much of the battle between the Athenians and their Syracusan and Spartan opponents took place.

Finally we travelled back to Catania from where we took a day trip to visit Mount Etna. Unfortunately the weather was against us but we were still able to see much of this famous volcano, which has shaped so much of the Sicilian landscape.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

The most enjoyable aspect of our trip to Sicily was certainly having the opportunity to visit so many historic sites. Not only to marvel at the magnificent architectural feats of the many different ages of Sicily, but also to simply stand in the same places as some of history's most revered figures, such as Empedocles and Archimedes. To visit the ancient Greek harbour of Syracuse was a great feeling. For even though they weren't there to see anymore, one could feel that one was standing in the same place where Archimedes built his defences against the Romans; one could imagine Empedocles walking through the temple complex of Agrigento.

It was also such a pleasure to visit a culture so different to that found in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Being able to sit outside so many cafes and munch on *gelato* and pizza was a treat the weather doesn't normally permit on a regular basis back home.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

I think the most challenging aspect of the trip was coping with the higher temperatures I'm not normally acquainted with back home. Our visit wasn't one where we just lay around by the pool or sea. We were always travelling, carrying our bags to and from bus/train stations and walking all over busy and crowded

cities. It must be said, however, that regular ice cream breaks eased any pain!

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Ever since I gave up my studies in Ancient Greek and Latin to pursue Chemistry, I have missed them every day. Being immersed in the classical languages and history was one of my fondest memories of high school. This trip was truly amazing in that it allowed me to relive those days. Every new ruin or historical site felt so special and set off an avalanche of memories from my days studying classics.

Another aspect that hit home during this trip was the poverty of Sicily. It was quite unexpected given Italy's wealth and rich tourism industry. The state of disrepair of Catania and Palermo was shocking at first. The amount of begging also was surprisingly high. I suppose the level of poverty in your own area is something people try to put to one side in getting on with their own lives. However, when you visit a new place these things really jump out at you.



I would like to acknowledge the support of St John's and the Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund. Their generosity made this wonderful trip possible.

Joining the Hungarian Archaeological Mission in Thebes

by Jennifer Moore

Location: Luxor, Egypt

Award: Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund & Robert Sloley Fund

Dates: 26 November — 17 December 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I joined the Hungarian Archaeological Mission in Thebes, a project excavating TT66 (a Late Egyptian tomb) and its immediate surroundings, including remains of earlier saff-tombs and a later Coptic monastery. My work involved processing the artefacts that were excavated over the duration of the archaeological season, with particular emphasis on the shabti collection of the concession. I was responsible for organising and cataloguing all objects in this collection. This included recording the context findspot of each shabti fragment, creating suitable and meaningful methods of categorisation, and creating technical drawings of particularly significant pieces.

As part of the project we also visited a number of tombs and temples in the region, in order to draw comparative references from iconography and so on. Following the project's completion I travelled



northwards to Cairo in order to visit the Egyptian Museum of Antiquities and the pyramids of Giza and Saqqara, an invaluable experience that helped to situate our work at TT66 within its broader historical framework.

[What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?](#)

The opportunity to take creative control of the cataloguing of a particular artefact type was particularly rewarding, especially given the relevance of the artefact category to my actual studies! Carrying out this work actually on-site, in the field, was a particular highlight – the landscape is beautiful and really brings home the reality of the work. I loved



working with both the Hungarian and Egyptian members of the project; it was fun to try to keep up with conversation being carried out simultaneously in a mixture of Hungarian, Arabic and English! We also visited a number of the other archaeological projects taking place in the region, providing a great international flavour.

[What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?](#)

The independence granted to me in the work I was asked to undertake was initially challenging, as I was essentially left to my own devices for the first time I had been given such a practical task! But I quickly became happy and confident with the material. The real challenges came when simply attempting to live in and travel through Egypt; certainly next time I go I'll attempt to prepare myself with a little more Arabic. Particularly when I was in public spaces alone I dealt with a lot of pressure simply by virtue of being a woman, which was an aspect of the travel that I had, to a degree, expected but not fully prepared myself for.

[How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?](#)

From an academic point of view, the opportunity to travel through Egypt, visiting a number of the monuments and tangibly experiencing ancient material culture that we have only formally learnt about from books and images, has greatly increased my appreciation for, and understanding of, these historical phenomena. In terms of my personal development, the challenges of working and travelling independently through a country less familiar to our own culture than, for instance, European destinations, were daunting but, if anything, they simply spurred my desire to understand such cultural differences in order to effectively live with them.

Participation in the Neubauer Expedition to Zincirli

by Christoph Schmidhuber

Location: Zincirli Höyük/Turkey

Award: Glyn and Ruth Daniel Fund & Robert Sloley Fund

Dates: 21 August – 27 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

The Neubauer Expedition to Zincirli, mainly led by the University of Chicago, aimed to excavate parts of Zincirli Höyük, which has long been identified as the Neo-Hittite provincial capital of Sam'al. This side has been intensively excavated in the late nineteenth century by a German excavation team who had taken with them or destroyed for posterity most of the monumental artworks or architecture. However, most of the lower town and parts of the tell have been left untouched by these excavations and therefore it has been possible for the Neubauer Expedition to investigate these areas since 2006. Research questions guiding these excavations include the clarification of chronological issues that have been remaining opaque only based on the German excavation reports and the socio-economic function and changes of the lower town during the Iron Age.

My role was that of a square assistant in Area 2, which was situated on the top of the tell where the German dig house was situated, and which therefore represented the highest point on the tell of untouched soil. Except for the attempt to find important structures that enrich our knowledge of the architectural plan of tell, the fact that 50 per cent of our area was a slope and that it was in between three different German refilled trenches made it a perfect location to get a clearer picture of the stratigraphic and chronological relations of these trenches. As we opened this area this year for the first time, we were not able to come very near to either of the two goals.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

What I enjoyed most was working together with a large group of very experienced excavators and being able to deal with raw archaeological data, which one cannot access that easily when studying at university. Moreover, I appreciated that my square supervisor offered me the opportunity to be involved in evaluating and interpreting our finds, which usually would not have been my responsibility but which was intellectually rewarding. This was especially interesting as I was able to read the old German excavation reports, which I was able to refer to in the field, e.g. in trying to transform the relative elevation data of the German excavations into our absolute elevation system to compare our area to the surrounding nineteenth century trenches. We also had a few seminars for the junior members of the team on special topics like investigation of faunal remains

and their statistical analysis. On top of that, several trips brought us to sites such as Tilmen Höyük, a Late Bronze Age site that has been transformed into an open-air museum, and Yesemek, an ancient stone quarry preparing large carved stone slabs for Sam'al and other nearby sites.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The working conditions were very challenging. The working day began at 5am and soon after 10am the temperature was about 35° C, which was really tough to work in. But the longer I worked under these conditions, the more I got used to them and eventually could adapt to them quite well. Another very trying aspect was the relationship with the local workmen. As they could not understand a lot of English, it was difficult to communicate with them effectively, though this definitely helped to improve my Turkish language skills by it constantly being necessary to practice the language and learn more useful phrases and constructions.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Participating in the excavations of Zincirli Höyük was rewarding in many ways. First of all, living through the process of archaeological documentation and interpretation certainly helps to be more critical and reflective about other people's interpretations, in the form of academic articles and books. As my square supervisor and I often had alternative views on

the raw data it is helpful to be able to acknowledge the subjective view of other archaeologists in their writings, too.

Secondly, being partly in charge for a larger group of workers required me to understand their issues and get a feeling for how to organise the labour. On the other hand, having to perform heavy manual labour myself, I have experienced the working conditions and will show appreciation for the difficult conditions and their effects on work efficiency.

Thirdly, this excavation certainly increased my knowledge of the excavation methodology, both by being taught about it by my supervisor and having to apply it on my own, and by the archaeology of Zincirli, especially by reading the old German excavation reports and trying to build connections to our current project.

An insight into the practice of clinical medicine in rural Madagascar

by Zara Milner

Location: Maventibao, Madagascar

Award: Hanley Fund

Dates: 2–16 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I worked with a local nurse to provide daily medical care to the people of Maventibao and its surrounding villages. This region is 7km from the nearest road, has no running water or electricity and the people live off local resources. I aided with consultations, conducted tests and provided medication and advice to those who visited. I also walked twice weekly to surrounding areas in order to set up day clinics for those who were not mobile enough to reach us.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I experienced a lot of leeway with my role; I was largely trusted and my opinion was valued. The people were incredibly friendly, hard-working and grateful for advice and help. I got to immerse myself in Malagasy culture and lifestyle, and was treated as a

member of the family by those who helped to run the organisation.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

While the lifestyle was fascinating, it was also incredibly difficult to adapt to. No clean water meant I was only able to drink that which had come off boiled rice – an amount that was barely hydrating in the dry, hot climate and mountainous environment. No electricity meant I was without contact to the surrounding world for a fortnight, and being the only Westerner visiting at the time meant I could only communicate with my translator.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

The project has cemented my desire to do frontier medicine at some point during my career. I found the experience incredibly rewarding and was touched by how valued my efforts were, and by seeing the influence they had on the people. I was inspired by the attitudes of those I encountered, and impressed by the optimism and nonchalance with which they face conditions we could not and would not tolerate in the UK. In all, I hope to spend as much time as possible using the education and experience I have been granted with here to help those who can only dream of such things.

India – teaching and learning

by Samuel Pickup

Location: India and Nepal

Award: Hanley Fund

Dates: 27 June–21 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I spent one month teaching English, Maths and Science in Karsha Government High School in the Zanskar valley in Northern India. This is a small school with only 96 students in a very isolated area of the Indian Himalayas. I taught students between the ages of four and seventeen. After teaching for a month I spent time travelling around Northern India and Nepal, and this involved stopping off at a community medical centre in rural Bengal.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

On this project, being welcomed into a community and valued as a teacher was particularly enjoyable. I instantly became an important part of the school set-up and the students seemed to respond well to the lessons I gave. One of the most rewarding things was managing to get the really shy girls to start contributing and speaking up in class.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Having had no teaching experience, I found the pressure of having to teach a single class for upwards of an hour initially quite challenging. The students' level of English was far worse than the average in the state (Jammu and Kashmir) and so the state syllabuses were inappropriately aimed and not suitable for teaching at Karsha School. At times it was difficult to hit the right level of complexity to communicate well with the students and teach effectively.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Visiting the community health centre in rural Bengal was a great insight into how basic medicines delivered with limited resources can bring great benefits to a community. I got to observe several clinic sessions and it was particularly interesting to see how the patient-doctor dynamic was so different to what it is like within the NHS.

Volunteering in Tohoku and work experience at Kyorin Hospital

by Mayu Teranaka

Location: Ishinomaki and Tokyo, Japan

Award: Hanley Fund

Dates: 2–11 and 17–25 July 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

From 2 to 11 July, I volunteered in the town of Ishinomaki in Miyagi prefecture, where the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami hit hard on 11 March 2011 with catastrophic effects. More than 15,000 people have died and over 3,000 are still missing. Sixteen months on from the disaster, the area had begun to recover and people were beginning to move back, but the community was still reliant on input by volunteers.

My time spent volunteering involved both manual labour and community service. I stayed with the volunteering organisation 'It's Not Just Mud (INJM)', which has around 15–25 volunteers of varying nationalities and ages at any one time. Every day the volunteers were allocated to complete different jobs in Ishinomaki and sometimes beyond, such as helping to deconstruct damaged houses for renovation and

cooperating with residents to raise money for the recovery process.

After returning from Ishinomaki, I did work experience for one week at Kyorin Hospital in Tokyo. I visited the Kyorin Eye-Centre, one of the largest ophthalmology departments in Tokyo. I shadowed various doctors and observed many eye conditions such as cataracts and retinal detachment. Most of my time was spent shadowing Dr Okada in the age-related macular degeneration (AMD) clinic, witnessing diagnoses, check-ups and treatment. Treatments for AMD include steroid injections and injections of an anti-VEGF antibody fragment, the frequencies of which may be varied depending on the progression of the patient's condition.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

There were two jobs in which I was most involved during the 10 days that I volunteered. The first involved removing walls, floorboards and tsunami debris from the ground floor of a house in order to expose the foundations. The water level had risen to the ceiling of the ground floor, so renovation was necessary to make the house inhabitable again. Although I was only able to help with a small part of the entire renovation process of a single house, the residents were very grateful and welcoming, so it was a very fulfilling job.

The second job involved working with local women in a small village called Funakoshi to create

necklaces from recycled slates to sell and raise money for the community. Before the disaster, Funakoshi used to be a fishing village immediately next to the sea. The tsunami wiped the village clean of most of its buildings except for the local junior school in which we worked. The villagers have since moved away from Funakoshi, but every week some of them return to braid and paint necklaces using the fallen roof-slates. Despite having lost so much in the tsunami,

the ladies were very cheery and eager to talk, and although we had come to assist them, I felt as though I was even luckier to be able to spend time with them.

On work experience, I enjoyed learning about how patterns of AMD treatment are individually tailored to the patient. For example, patients may reduce their frequency of anti-VEGF injections and check-ups if the condition is well managed.

If the condition progresses, they may receive injections more frequently again. In addition to frequency, the number of injections is also important as too many injections would increase risk of side-effects such as raised intraocular pressure, which in turn would cause an increased risk of glaucoma and retinal detachment. It was also interesting learning about the contrasting health care system in Japan, which influences the use of different types of anti-VEGF to treat age-related and non-age-related macular degeneration



as insurance covers different medication for these conditions.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

When speaking to locals during volunteering, I realised how short 16 months was, despite it seeming quite long. I heard many stories about the earthquake and tsunami that were impossible to empathise with as I had never experienced an earthquake of a magnitude greater than four – in fact, my first and second ever earthquakes were experienced during my short stay in Ishinomaki.

I cannot remember what I was doing in 2011 at the time of the earthquake, and like most people in England, I only heard of it the following day, at which point I still did not realise the scale of damage it had caused and was still causing. It was only when I saw the television footage of the tsunami sweeping houses off their foundations that I even got a glimpse of the reality in the disaster areas. Even after helping to raise money to aid the affected regions, it still felt like a distant event in a faraway land that I probably never would have visited if it had not been for this volunteering occasion.

When I first arrived in Ishinomaki, it was difficult to accept the reality that an earthquake and tsunami could do so much damage to an area, even for someone with no prior connections to the area. I cannot imagine how much shock the residents must have felt, but it makes me shudder even to try.

Although there was no specific event that I found challenging during volunteering, at first I struggled to understand and deal with the emotions that I felt. However, despite the terrifying memories and tsunami-scarred land, the locals seemed to be relatively optimistic with their lives, for which I was relieved and glad.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

My experiences in Ishinomaki made me realise that although it is easy to be distracted by the photos and figures that can be seen in the news from afar, when seen up close each affected individual is still living optimistically to overcome their everyday struggles. The most important part of volunteering is to contribute to what may seem negligible, understanding that this is what allows the community to strive bit by bit towards recovery. I would like to apply this to my studies in becoming a doctor, to persevere each day towards helping others.

Work experience at Kyorin Hospital gave me an insight into more specialist areas of medicine. In the past I have had the opportunity to observe more general areas such as general surgery, but never had the chance to see how medical staff and equipment adapt to working in as specialist an area as ophthalmology. Although there is still a long way to go before I begin to consider specialising in specific parts of medicine, I feel that when the time comes, this will be a very useful experience to help me to decide.

Comparing biomedical and alternative medicines in urban and rural India

by Jasmine Wall

Location: Hyderabad and Udaipur, India

Award: Hanley Fund

Dates: 15 June–18 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I was working in rural and urban parts of India to research different attitudes towards biomedical and alternative healthcare. In order to carry this out, I spent six weeks in Hyderabad (urban India), working in a medical laboratory. During this time, I visited several health centres and hospitals in Hyderabad. Whilst in Hyderabad I also collaborated with the Tribal Development Office for Andhra Pradesh state, which gave me access to rare historical documents on rural healthcare. The office also facilitated several excursions to rural Andhra Pradesh (Vijayawada, Ongole) where I discussed healthcare with local doctors, housewives and farm workers. I then travelled to Udaipur in Rajasthan state, which has the densest tribal population in India. I visited extremely rural areas of Udaipur without running water or transport links, which allowed me to compare attitudes to healthcare in a much poorer

context. I was surprised to find how deeply traditional medicines are integrated into Indian culture. Although many people do not explicitly look to Ayurvedic principles for their health needs, Ayurvedic principles are embedded in religion, cookery and daily life.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

One of the most difficult parts of this summer was dealing with the challenges of living completely immersed in a different culture; particularly in rural areas of Andhra Pradesh state, where it was a serious challenge to arrange transport and food! Secondly, it was challenging to understand how biomedical medicine changes from country to country. In the UK, it is widely considered to be the only evidence based medicine. However, it is particularly true in rural areas of India that biomedical medicine holds little more evidence than any other form of medicine. Investigating one woman's medicine cupboard, she had been considerably overcharged by her local doctor for pills that she believed were to cure her chronic menstrual problems. In fact, the doctor had given her travel sickness pills. I found it difficult to absorb the idea that although biomedical medicine symbolises scientific rigour in the UK, in rural India it is equally likely to symbolise charlatanry.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

As a medical student, I will meet a broad diversity of people during my clinical career. People will

have very different lay-beliefs that influence their own healthcare decisions. It is important for me to understand the ways that culture and social context affects the healthcare decisions that people make, in order to dovetail medical healthcare with the beliefs of the individual. The time I have spent in India has shown me not only that culture changes from family to family, but also that people often believe one thing in principal, and another thing in practice.

From a personal perspective, working in India has given me a unique chance to work in a completely different culture, and to adapt to the challenges that this has brought. It has been a real learning curve, to see the world – and medicine in particular – from a completely new horizon.



Thank you to the many people who have supported this summer work and made it happen. Without such assistance, the research I did this summer would have been impossible.

Healthcare and its cultural influences in China

by Lynn (Yaolin) Zheng

Location: Liaoning Province, China

Award: Hanley Fund

Dates: 2–29 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Over the long vacation, I travelled to China to explore its healthcare system and how it copes with the demands placed on it by a huge, ageing population. I was based at the First Hospital of the Chinese Medical University (CMU), a large regional teaching hospital in Liaoning Province. I shadowed consultants and talked to junior doctors across a range of specialities in clinics, on the wards and in theatre to gain an insight into all aspects of hospital care.

Wanting to find out more about the role of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in Chinese healthcare, I visited a TCM clinic/dispensary. It was much quieter and calmer than the hospital and gave the impression that demand for alternative medicine had perhaps decreased with the rising popularity of imported Western medicines. However, looking around state- and family-owned pharmacies, TCM concoctions made up a large proportion of the medicines on sale. From talking to patients, it seems

that people tend to mainly use TCM and herbal medicines to promote their general health and prevent diseases like colds and fevers or to self-medicate for more minor ailments (often ones that are not seen as being serious enough to warrant an expensive doctor's consultation). People will also try very strong TCM concoctions if conventional treatments have proved ineffective. TCM treatments are particularly popular among the older generation.

Although often superficially similar, differences between healthcare in the UK and China soon became apparent. There is a curious dichotomy between the parts of Chinese healthcare that are more developed than their counterparts here and those that are less well developed. For example, because full body health check-ups are becoming very popular in China, the radiology departments at CMU had state-of-the-art CT and MRI machines that could produce especially high resolution scans and which were in some cases dedicated to use by a specific speciality like neurosurgery. However there is little public awareness about the risks of too much exposure to radiation from frequent CTs for a healthy person over a lifetime.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

It was fascinating to talk to medical students about their studies and make comparisons with mine so far. At the moment, they have three different types of medical school courses – Japanese-style, American-style and Chinese-style, which all have

different structures and durations. It was so interesting to compare the different ways in which we are taught. For example, Chinese medical students do not have supervisions or seminars, instead lecturers set questions in their handouts and hold question and answer sessions with the whole year group. It is uncommon for students to have any work experience before going to medical school nor are they required to attend an interview, and their course and exams are entirely based around specifically-written textbooks that they must memorise. Perhaps due to the education system, and because working in a hospital abroad for a period of time has become a requirement for promotion to consultant status, the junior doctors had a strangely idealised vision of healthcare in the USA and the UK (although not many had heard of the NHS!).

It was interesting to have the chance to look around their medical school, which is situated adjacent to the hospital. The concept of universities that exclusively teach medicine, with all of the laboratories, lecture theatres, dissection rooms and other facilities located on one site, seemed rather strange and novel. In terms of accommodation, they are assigned to dormitories of eight and are not allowed to use any electric appliances other than a small fan in the summer – which made me feel incredibly fortunate to have access to such fantastic facilities at John's!

I got the opportunity to go into theatre for the first time, which was really very exciting. I have always been interested in going down the surgical route but,

having only ever been allowed to go as far as the anaesthetics room, I was concerned that I might not enjoy the actual surgery part of it. However it turned out that I absolutely loved the experience and it has made me think about going into a surgical speciality more seriously.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The greatest challenge I faced was getting to grips with medical terminology in Chinese. Despite the fact that many of the junior doctors I talked to had attended lectures and passed medical exams written in English (and my having learnt some specialist vocabulary in advance), I had to resort to playing many rounds of medical 'Taboo' to find out what things meant or how the name of a condition was translated.

Something that turned out to be surprisingly difficult was finding my way around the hospital! As the largest hospital in the region, it spanned multiple, multi-storey buildings, with a single speciality often spanning multiple (but strangely non-adjacent) floors. The elevators supplying the clinics (on the lower floors) were separate from the ones for the wards (which only traversed between the upper floors) and this problem was compounded by the fact that two of the buildings had different floor numbering systems. Unfortunately, the signage in the hospital was also very confusing. Given how I was still struggling with this by my third week at the hospital, it was worrying

to consider how first-time patients and their relatives are able to navigate their way around the hospital.

I was required to wear a doctor's white coat on my placement and although I did not have formal hospital ID, a lot of patients or their relatives came up to me asking me for medical advice or trying to pay for medication. Of course I explained that I was only a medical student and passed on their queries to a doctor qualified to answer them or pointed them towards the payment desk. However, I found it disconcerting how quickly people placed their trust in me once I had donned a lab coat, especially since these coats can easily be bought from the medical supplies shops not far from the hospital.

I was also surprised by how few female doctors there were working in the hospital. Over the three days I spent in A&E, I only ever saw one female doctor but did not meet any female medical students or junior doctors at all, and sometimes I did feel somewhat out of place. In China, there is still very much a tradition of girls going into nursing, midwifery or specialities like anaesthetics. After having 'Nurse!' shouted at me quite a few times, it has made me more aware of how nurses everywhere are often treated poorly compared to doctors and with little of the respect that they deserve.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This project was my first experience of several specialities like Neurosurgery, General, Vascular

and Thyroid surgery, which has given me a clearer idea of what kind of speciality I would like to work in in the future. Talking to people who use TCM treatments alongside prescribed medicines has improved my understanding of why people choose to use alternative medicine and the role it has within a healthcare system.

It was interesting to see that many of the problems that China's healthcare system currently faces are the same as those which exist in the UK but on a larger scale. For example, there were severe bed shortages (and therefore drip-stand shortages) on a few occasions in A&E, with patients temporarily being allocated to tables at makeshift stations and their relatives holding up their saline infusions. Much of the overcrowding results from the public perception that bigger hospitals have better equipment and more competent doctors; indeed the smaller city hospital I later visited was unnervingly quiet and shockingly underused, with people mainly going there for vaccinations and treatment for minor trauma.

Perhaps the most obvious difference between the healthcare system in England and China is that the Chinese healthcare system is private – registration and payment form an important part of treatment. Not everybody has health insurance and there is no pension system. Since an operation followed by a short hospital stay can easily add up to the equivalent of tens of thousands of pounds, many people simply cannot afford treatment. I heard about heart-breaking cases of elderly people who, after being diagnosed with a serious illness, refused treatment or starved

themselves so that they would not be a financial burden on their children. It made me truly appreciate for the first time how lucky we are in this country to have the NHS.



I am very grateful to St John's College and to the benefactors of the Hanley Fund for providing me with this invaluable opportunity to observe healthcare in China first-hand.

Community development projects in the remote Central American rainforests

by Simon Allan

Location: Nicaragua and Costa Rica

Award: Johnian Society Travel Exhibitions

Dates: 29 June–16 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

This summer I spent seven weeks in Nicaragua and Costa Rica working with Raleigh International, a sustainable development charity. The project involved several phases including the implementation of a gravity-fed water system in an isolated Nicaraguan community, teaching English to locals, both young and old, and a gruelling 300km coast-to-coast trek through the heart of Costa Rica.

The first few days were spent in our Raleigh Fieldbase in Turrialba, and involved survival training, cross-cultural awareness lessons, Spanish oral practice and our project briefings. After our initial acclimatisation, our group headed north into the mountains of Achuapa, Nicaragua to live with a small community of around 300 people in El Pajarito. Our group were allocated to different

host families, thus allowing ourselves to be fully immersed into the community's lifestyle. Living in such an environment allowed me to help out with day-to-day tasks such as making the famous Central American maize tortillas and feeding the household animals.

The locals currently drink water from rivers that have polluted sources, and are often dried up in the summer. Working alongside community leaders and our project partner, Juan Francisco Paz Silva, we spent over a month constructing a gravity-fed water system with its source at a natural spring high in the mountains. We dammed this spring, dug a 2km trench to an existing water tank in the village, laid the pipes and refilled the trenches. Prior to its installation, we conducted interviews with locals to find out what





they wanted from the project and how they would personally benefit from it – part of Raleigh International’s ongoing efforts to liaise with locals to make sure the projects we’re involved with meet their needs and expectations. The locals organised a huge party for the inaugural turning on of the taps in the village, reminding our Raleigh group that the benefits of having ready access to safe and clean drinking water – a basic amenity which we often take for granted in developed countries – will be felt for generations to come.

During the afternoons we held English lessons, which were initially intended for local children but were extended due to the overwhelming demand from adults who were also keen to learn. We designed lessons to accommodate for various proficiencies of English, with classes in the community centre for beginner, intermediate and advanced speakers.

A few days back at the Raleigh Fieldbase gave us time to debrief and share our own personal experiences with the charity, as well as meet up with the other Raleigh volunteers who had been working on other projects, such as building kindergartens, restoring some of Costa Rica’s National Parks and collaborating with



Left: Digging the 2km trench
Overleaf left: ‘Beginners’ English class
Overleaf right: Local children at playtime







local partners on turtle conservation. After a quick change of kit, I headed out on a mission to trek across the whole of Costa Rica, spanning the country and experiencing its breathtaking landscapes and incredible biodiversity.

My 300km trek began at the Caribbean Coast in eastern Costa Rica and our group navigated through the mountains, rainforests and jungle terrain that cover the heart of the country. Carrying all our own equipment and food, we trekked to a maximum height of almost 3,000m at the peak of La Esperanza. Throughout the trek we were met with incredible wildlife, from sloths and iguanas to monkeys and thousands of insects, which isn't surprising given that Costa Rica is one of the most biodiverse countries in the world. After 20 challenging days, our group reached the Pacific Coast having spanned an entire continent on foot. Our final few days were spent relaxing at the Pacific Coast before getting a minibus back to the Raleigh Fieldbase where we evaluated our time in Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and bid farewell to the incredible people we met there.

[What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?](#)

Although I experienced so many incredible moments whilst living in Nicaragua and Costa Rica, I think my main highlight was getting the chance to live with a local family in El Pajarito where, after some

initial difficulties, I got a really interesting insight into their lives, their jobs, their political views and much more. This unique, and rare, cultural exchange enabled me to form a really strong relationship with my host family and we have since been in contact via post.

The actual gravity-fed water system project we implemented was the culmination of a year's hard work of design and logistics planning, so seeing it finally come to fruition was incredible. The party that our host families organised to celebrate the turning on of the village taps only served to remind us how grateful the people of El Pajarito were for the hard work and money we had dedicated to their village.

Costa Rica is officially the happiest country on the planet, and this was definitely evident in the warmth of everyone we met. I was overwhelmed by how eager the locals were to accommodate us, even when they had so little. On the trek in particular, we met so many welcoming people who would make us coffee and a hot lunch when our trekking rations were running low, and some even let us stay in their houses overnight to save us from sleeping in tents in the monsoon rains.

On one of our few days back in the luxury of Fieldbase, we had a visit from Richard Benyon, an MP who works at DEFRA, showing that our hard work is being recognised internationally. Hopefully this visit will raise the profile of Raleigh International further, which could help to secure more funding so that the vital work I have helped with can continue.

Left: English lesson



One of the things I enjoyed most was getting back to basics and living without home comforts. Having no access to phones or internet, washing in rivers, cooking on fires and having only one pair of clothes really made me appreciate how overwhelmed with material goods we are in the developed world.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Although I learnt some Spanish before leaving for Nicaragua and Costa Rica, communication problems still did exist, which made the 'local interviews' stage of the project particularly difficult. However this made me realise how effective non-verbal communication can be, and I enjoyed seeing how much my Spanish improved over the two months.

One of the most challenging aspects of the building project was the affectionately named Tico Time, which in my experience usually meant locals turning up an hour or two late for work, or building materials taking a couple of days longer than expected to arrive. This was a cultural clash from the punctuality practised at Cambridge, and required patience and flexibility in order to reschedule activities but has definitely improved my organisation.

The lack of water was a serious issue we had to contend with as we were working during the height of summer, when the river that currently supplies El

Pajarito with a water source had started to dry up. Thus, a shower became a rare occurrence, which was an interesting aspect of the project, especially after spending our days digging trenches in the midday sun. However, this only served to reiterate how important and worthwhile the project was to the locals.

Living out of a rucksack was quite challenging for several reasons. Firstly, as we were carrying about 20kg of group kit and food, there was little spare room for clothing and so most of my two months were spent in only two pairs of clothes. Secondly, the monsoon rains were so heavy that they often managed to penetrate through my rucksack and its waterproof covering, meaning that most of my equipment and clothes were permanently damp (and unsurprisingly smelly as a result!).

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This project has been invaluable in providing me with personal experiences of international and sustainable development, a career I hope to pursue after graduation. I am currently studying modules in development economics and this first-hand experience will help me apply the theories we are studying. Being immersed in the Latin American culture for two months has also improved my Spanish, and I hope to continue working with the language in the future.

Left: Hiking group



Above: Simon Allan with host family in El Pajarito

Spending such a long time in unfamiliar environments and coping with unfamiliar and sometimes challenging situations has boosted by own confidence, as well as improving my skill set. The unpredictability associated with Tico Time meant I had to be flexible to work under pressure and under constantly changing circumstances. For most of the time I was working within, as well as leading, groups of various sizes thus developing my teamwork and leadership skills.

Working with Raleigh International has given me a new appreciation of grassroots projects, and highlighted the importance of collaboration with locals in order to make any development project a success. However as a small charity, it has also introduced me to the problems faced by NGOs such as funding and bureaucracy, which are naturally present in a sector so focused on charity.

Hopefully this experience will set me in good stead for NGO work later in my life, and has allowed me to make lifelong friends with people who have similar ambitions and passions as myself. The trip has heightened my sense of global responsibility, and confirmed my motivations for wanting to make a meaningful difference with my life.



I am extremely grateful for the funding that allowed me to participate in this incredible opportunity in Nicaragua and Costa Rica, and which helped me support such an inspirational charity.

Religion and culture in Benin

by Sipke Shaughnessy

Location: Benin

Award: Johnian Society Travel Exhibitions

Dates: 5–19 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I arrived in Cotonou airport in Benin on 5 September with a very limited knowledge of French, a malfunctioning mobile phone and no idea of who was collecting me from the airport. After wandering around the airport aimlessly for some time, I came across a group of Beninese men scratching their heads and carrying a handwritten sign which read 'Miss Sipke Shaughnessy'. They had been expecting my female alter ego for over two hours, but this did not hamper their cheery dispositions once it became clear that I was in fact the lost, unshaven Irishman and not a blonde supermodel (their words, not mine).

Following this initial confusion, we drove from Cotonou to Ouidah, where I would spend the next two weeks. The hour-long drive was my very first taste of Africa and it was truly exhilarating. I have yet to encounter a more vibrant and exciting place. The (often candlelit) streets remain packed with people visiting friends, eating out and partying until well after nightfall.



In Ouidah, I rented a room in the Maison de la Joie: a shelter for abandoned and enslaved children, which was run by a local woman and her family. The money that I spent at the Maison went directly towards funding the shelter, and it provided me with the perfect base to make friends and learn about life in Benin. In the first few days, I explored the town of Ouidah to try and discover what I could about Vodoun. Vodoun (or voodoo) is Benin's national religion and is practised by the majority of people, albeit often in syncretised form. I visited several voodoo sites, such as the Temple of Pythons (a temple that houses a family of sacred pythons, which



are worshipped by particular voodoo sects) and the Sacred Forest – a forest that is home to King Kpassé, a seventeenth-century king who transformed himself into a tree in order to escape from his enemies. Throughout my time in Benin, I also visited several sites that commemorate the victims of the slave trade,



such as the Port de Non Retour near to Ouidah. The museum in Ouidah's Fort Portugaise also provides a harrowing but fascinating insight into the slave trade, as well as the return of many members of the Beninese diaspora in the nineteenth century from Brazil. I also visited other towns outside of Ouidah,

such as Cotonou, Porto Novo and a Catholic mission in Pahou. I didn't follow any particular itinerary, I simply went along with the friends that I'd made in Ouidah. As a result, I had some truly remarkable experiences, which would not have been possible without making local friends. One example of this is the integrated agricultural production facility in Porto Novo, which is almost entirely self-sufficient and produces zero waste, and where I got to meet some of the workers.

To sum up my activities while in Benin, I did my best to visit all of the major sites and learn what I could about Vodoun and Benin's history. However, for the most part I found myself hanging out and doing what my Beninese friends did, and this led to many of my most valuable experiences while in Benin.

[What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?](#)

My most valuable learning experiences came by hanging out with the friends that I'd made while staying in Ouidah. For example, I made friends with a man who claimed that his father was king of the town and a descendant of King Kpassé. After visiting his 'Palais Royal', I discovered that this wasn't a lie. Royalty is still very much present in Benin, and while kings and queens have no real power, I often came across people who would claim to be in some way in line to the throne of Ouidah. Through a local sociology student, I was also privileged enough to meet one of the practising Vodoun priests in the town.

Although the plan was initially to have me initiated into a Vodoun sect, this turned out to be impossible, and I was content enough to have a look around his temple (although the bowl of chicken entrails sitting in the doorway seemed to have festered somewhat and was quite nauseating).

Hanging out with the locals also provided me with a special insight into the place that Vodoun has in Beninese life. Even devout Catholics, while sometimes not even involved in Vodoun ritual, believe in the power of Vodoun spirits and priests. As such, people often turn to the Catholic church in order to counter potential Vodoun curses or cases of sorcery. I learned this when a friend of mine explained why the captain of his football team kept injuring his knee, and why it was thus important that his team go to church. I was also lucky enough to witness a Vodoun death rite from the balcony of my house, and the procedure was explained to me by my Beninese friends. Having also been to a Beninese wedding in the nearby Catholic church, it seems to me that Vodoun and Catholicism take charge at different stages in the Beninese life-cycle. The wedding I attended was overtly (and almost ostentatiously) Christian, while funerals and the realm of death in general seems to be conceded (although not entirely) to Vodoun. While I certainly haven't even begun to learn everything there is to know about religion in Benin, I could not have made the few discoveries that I did make had it not been for my Beninese friends.

Aside from the many things that I managed to learn about life in Benin, the friendships that I formed



while in Ouidah were in themselves invaluable. I am still in contact with many of the people whom I met while there and I have been invited to visit again. I am grateful to the Maison de la Joie for this reason, because staying there immersed me in Beninese life, thus allowing me to make these incredible friends and see sides to Benin that the average tourist simply can't access.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

I had taken it upon myself to learn French over the summer before leaving for Benin. As a result, my French skills were rather rudimentary. I consequentially found it quite difficult to ask the kinds of questions that I wanted and to be self-sufficient.

I travelled to Benin on my own, and while this was never really a problem, I did find myself relying a little too heavily on my Beninese friends to show me around. Loneliness was never really an issue, but making decisions alone and venturing out of the house was often surprisingly difficult.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Aside from what I learnt about religion and Beninese history, this project gave me an insight into the work of an anthropologist. I had made it my aim while in Benin to learn as much as possible by hanging out with locals in a desperate attempt to claim some sort of ethnographic experience. Having

made such an attempt, I feel like I can appreciate the difficulties faced by anthropological fieldworkers in making friends, overcoming language barriers and dealing with boredom and loneliness.

The project also helped me substantially in developing as a person. Because I had travelled on my own, I was often forced to engage all of my interpersonal skills and accept responsibility for my own decision making. This was far more difficult than I'd imagined, however I learnt to cope rather quickly, and I think this will certainly help me to be more independent in the future. West Africa is a notoriously difficult region for tourists, so I'm sure that my experiences there will serve me well wherever else my travels may take me.

Although it seems clichéd to say so, and although I found myself far more overwhelmed by the richness of cultural life in Benin, this was my first time visiting a third-world country, and I did find myself moved substantially by the ever-present signs of poverty. However, my experience in this regard also turned me away from the condescending attitude that we often adopt towards impoverished Africans. Regardless of their socio-economic circumstances, all of the Beninese people that I met were extremely proud, talented and creative. Rather than consigning them to perpetual aid programmes, perhaps we should begin taking local entrepreneurs seriously and harness that talent in a way that is sustainable, because the Beninese certainly have a lot to offer.

Cambridge Tien Shan Expedition: In search of unclimbed mountains

by Joanne Smith

Location: Kyrgyzstan

Award: Johnian Society Travel Exhibitions

Dates: 28 July–25 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

The trip was split into two parts: three weeks mountaineering, followed by a week travelling around the northern part of the country and experiencing Kyrgyz culture.

For the mountaineering phase, seven friends and I (all current students or recent graduates of the University of Cambridge) camped far up in the Shamsi Tuyuk, a remote valley in the Kyrgyz Ala-Too Range, south of the capital, Bishkek. We were deposited by an enormous ex-Soviet truck-bus at the head of the road and walked 6km to our base, carrying 0.4 tonnes of kit and food between us under our own steam over two days. Once at base camp, we saw no one and no signs of civilisation except what we had brought with us, for 16 days. Marmots and a pair of bearded vultures were our only companions.



The main aim of the expedition was to explore and reach the summit of at least one of the mountains around the valley – none of which had any previous recorded ascents. We climbed in two teams of four on alternate days, with ‘rest days’ spent doing base camp chores, communicating by radio with the climbing team and being ready to act as a rescue party, should they need it (thankfully, they never did). My team reached the summits of six peaks, all over 4,000m, of which four were first recorded ascents and two were second ascents. The highlight was reaching the top of the highest peak climbed by the expedition at 4,383m, after a long and challenging ascent that had begun at 1 am. Most of the routes completed were on ice and snow, and we judged the technical difficulties to be mostly around the alpine grade PD (*peu difficile*). The real challenge, however, lay in



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CAMBRIDGE TIEN
SHAN EXPEDITION

pod





stepping into the unknown, without footpaths, marked routes or guidebooks, and also without the safety net of nearby dedicated helicopter rescue and medical services.

One of our secondary aims was to be as environmentally responsible as possible. As officer for Environment, Ethics and Science, it was my duty to ensure that we left as little impact as possible on the unspoilt and rarely visited valley. Among other things, I did this by maintaining proper facilities for the disposal of human waste and carefully thought-out washing and cooking routines. Our over-arching policy was to bring as much waste as possible back to the UK for recycling and proper disposal, as Bishkek does not have a sustainable waste management system.

The post-expedition week, spent travelling around Lake Issyk-Kul, the second-largest alpine lake in the world, was an eye-opening introduction to Central Asia. We made a point of using local transport and staying in homestays, yurts and small, informal guest houses wherever possible, in order to maximise our interaction with the very welcoming Kyrgyz people. Horses are still central to their culture, and we went horse-trekking and watched a display of traditional horse games, including one resembling polo but played using a headless goat instead of a 'ball'. We also met an eagle hunter, visited some of the country's more well-known mountain valleys, explored the Soviet-flavoured Bishkek, and enjoyed sampling the local cuisine. It was a week of stark contrast to the

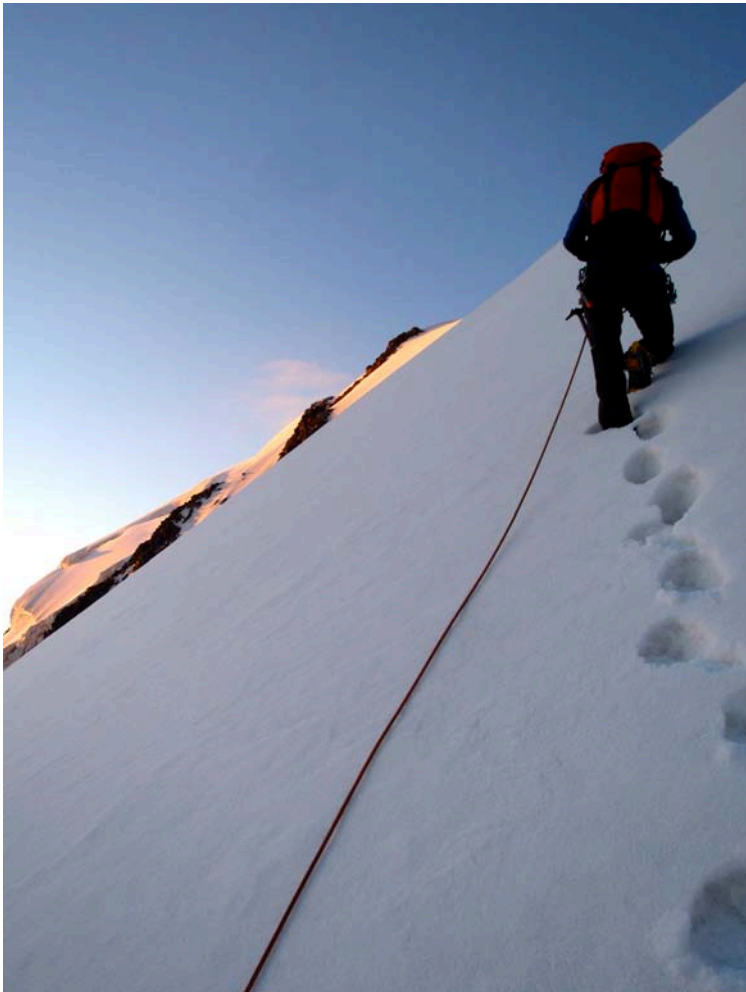
focused isolation of the mountaineering expedition, but both were unforgettable experiences.

Throughout the trip, we were able to communicate with home via a satellite phone, charged using a solar panel, and friends and family were able to follow our progress on our website: www.catse.org.uk. This site now acts as a permanent record of the venture, hosting comprehensive reports and photographs. It is also intended to allow others with similar aspirations to see how such an expedition develops, from the first stages of planning to completion.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

The feeling of being the first to stand on top of a 4,000m+ mountain takes some beating, but the journey to get there – being involved in the expedition from the start, knowing that we made it happen without help from tour companies or guides, and seeing all our plans and hard work come together successfully – was very rewarding. I enjoyed being self-sufficient and having to approach the mountains as an explorer, with no knowledge of what was around the next corner or over the next ridge: an aspect of mountaineering that is rarely on offer in the modern era.

It was also a great opportunity to visit a country slightly off the beaten tourist trail and become acquainted with the rich history of the Central Asian region, and a privilege to meet the Kyrgyz people and



be introduced to their ancient-meets-modern, East-meets-West, nomadic-meets-Soviet culture.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

I found it more difficult than I had expected to maintain a sense of humour throughout the mountaineering phase. Eight equal partners is a lot of people to keep happy and get to agree on important (not to mention trivial) decisions!

Despite having travelled widely in the past, I have never quite experienced such an intense immersion into such a different culture, and I found this a challenge to adapt to after several weeks of isolation during the mountaineering phase.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

As a geomorphologist I found it fascinating and inspiring to live and explore so intimately among mountain and glacial landscapes, but the expedition was a far more personal than academic exercise. I have learnt a huge amount about how expeditions are organised and run, as well as gaining insights into present-day exploration, the organisations that support and promote it, and how other expedition teams can extend our geographical knowledge of the world. I have learnt how to be entirely self-sufficient in a remote area, including important wilderness first-aid skills, how expeditions can be environmentally responsible, and how to get the most out of visiting another culture far from home. My problem-solving and teamwork skills also received a good brush-up!

History in the bricks: A study of Chinese culture from the ancient architecture

by Moquan Wan

Location: Beijing, China

Award: Johnian Society Travel Exhibitions & Peter Allan Travel Award

Dates: 27 June–10 July 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I spent two weeks in Beijing, the current capital city and economic and cultural centre of China, and also the capital of many dynasties in the history of China. I visited several historic relics, and in addition to the magnificence and delicacy of the architecture, I tried to see the history during which these architectures were built, and to appreciate the rich cultural deposit behind the walls. I also conducted some research before and after the visit, and the buildings were much more impressive once I knew their symbolisms and functionalities. I compared the architectures built in different dynasties and summarised the similarities and differences between the dynasties, in terms of the cultural values, political stands and religious beliefs.

After the trip I interviewed some professors at Capital Normal University in Beijing, and they shared with me their perspectives on the influence of culture and politics on the architecture. They brought my understanding of Chinese history to a more profound level, and they enabled me to see the convoluted links of cultural transition along the history.

I had also paid particular attention to some artistic features of the architecture, like the small animals sitting along the eaves, which show the social status of the owner of the house. These features were like little surprises along the trip, and many of them, like the drawings on the beam of the decorated corridor, tell a lot about the folk stories of the time.



鳳東揚禪

鳳韶譜履舜瑄情陳益地圖

雄扇開時媽黃喜裏齊天







What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

It may sound a bit silly but I really enjoyed imagining myself as the people in the past, going where they were and living their lives. It was great fun wandering around the palaces, the altars, the decorated corridors, the long stone bridges and the grand gates, trying to picture the working life of the former government and the extravagant pleasure of the royal family. I could hear the gongs and drums striking the hours while walking past their towers. I could see thousands of rebellion soldiers climbing up the high walls while staring at the debris of the wall bricks. I could even impersonate the emperor praying to the lord for the prosperity and progress of the empire while standing at the centre of the altar. It was as if Chinese history was being replayed vividly before me.

It was also interesting to walk along Hutong (the passageway between residences) and Siheyuan (a traditional residence with a square yard in the centre of four one-storey buildings), enjoy roasted ducks and green tea, stop by the Peking opera singers, play Chinese chess with the friendly locals and talk about the daily life of Chinese citizens centuries ago.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The trip was pretty straightforward despite the burning sunshine. For instance, the Summer Palace (a summer resort exclusively for the royal family) was



a huge garden and it took me from 9am to 5pm walking under the sun.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This trip was a whole new experience to me. I planned my own schedule, completed the tasks I assigned to myself and enjoyed myself thoroughly. Now I am more confident in travelling alone and I enjoy the freedom of it.

I have also learnt that, during my research, walking and viewing would be more inspiring if equipped with some background knowledge of the history, functionalities and symbolism of the architecture. As mentioned earlier, I could successfully imagine myself as someone who lived in Beijing centuries ago after some research on the history and customs of the city.



Many thanks to the College and the sponsors of the awards. This incredible trip would be impossible without your great support. It was much nicer to experience Chinese culture by immersing myself in the historic relics rather than sitting researching in a room.

Alps and Escapades of Piedmont and the Canton Ticino: Butler Overland

by Julia Powles

Location: Italy and Switzerland

Award: Johnian Society Travel Exhibitions & Roberts Fund

Dates: 25 June–9 July 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

A curious, charming and startling 130-year-old guidebook from that idiosyncratic Johnian alumnus and Victorian polymath, Samuel Butler, provided the focus for this expedition. In two packed weeks in early summer, accompanied by my brother Mark and good friend Chloe, we retraced some of the journeys described in Butler's little-read but continuously published travelogue, *Alps & Sanctuaries of Piedmont & the Canton Ticino* (1882). Our travels took us over 600km by bicycle, foot and boat through quaint villages, lakeside resorts and spectacular landscapes filled with vibrant pastures, wildflowers, ibex, marmots, glinting lakes and soaring mountain ranges.

We commenced in Andermatt – in dark, rainy, Gothic, German-speaking Switzerland – fittingly caricatured to satisfy Butler's characteristic dismissal



Above: Tremolo, photo by Chloe Burnett

of this region in favour of the Italian side. Ascending the 2,106m St Gotthard Pass we enjoyed the sweeping descent of the Tremola, a breathtaking cobblestone path containing 40 tight hairpin bends that Butler endured by diligence (public horse-drawn carriage) and which formed the principal north-south connection over the Alps before the advent of rail tunnels. On entering the Italian-speaking Canton Ticino, we were treated to a scene of laughable splendour: glorious sunshine, rainbows and the charming town of Airolo. For Butler, any such occasion evoked the music of Handel – in his mind, the greatest musician and poet that ever lived – but for



us, it was Puccini. Liberally scattered throughout his book are extracts from Handel, along with some 70 drawings in Butler's own hand. With these to guide and stimulate us, we explored his well-loved Valle Leventina, through Faido and its many surrounding villages and sights, Biasca, Giornico, Bellinzona, Locarno, and eventually down to Mendrisio and Chiasso at the southern tip of Switzerland. We clambered to countless alpine churches and villages that would otherwise have escaped our attention, with Butler's evocative descriptions, illustrations and frequently-outlandish musings providing constant reward and amusement as they transported us to another time and mind, and brought a multitude of unadorned and unexplained sights to life.

While Butler was at his best in a three-piece suit on an all-day climb to a distant village with 60 people and a humble chapel, the warmth drew us down to the lively lakes – the three gems of lakes Maggiore, Como and Lugano – for the second week of our travels. We travelled the length of Lake Maggiore, the biggest of the lakes, by ferry, exploring Butler's favoured Castle of Angera and bypassing the heavily adorned Isola Madre and Isola Bella (again, dismissed by an undergraduate Butler as 'an example of how far human extravagance and folly can spoil a rock' – to which one might reply 'but there are plenty more rocks in the sea'). With music being so central to Butler's experience of the region, we were determined to inject the same into ours. We soon

tired of an exclusive diet of Handel, but our timing coincided with two major jazz festivals (loosely so-called) – JazzAscona, which we enjoyed in Ascona and Cannobio, and Estival Jazz Lugano, where we were treated to three nights of double-bill world-class performers from Amadou and Miriam to Nile Rogers and Chic. We took great delight in imagining how Butler would have reacted to the music and, indeed, swathes of other developments in the century and more since his time.

Finally, from the south of Ticino we cycled around Lake Como, enjoying the excuse of comparative experience to hoon around for 60km in a jet-boat on a completely empty lake and, later, after cycling around Lake Lugano, Agno and other parts, to meander 600m in a pedal-boat. Butler dragged us up mountains and to *sacre montes* at each place we visited and, less voluntarily, we also accidentally booked several hotels high above the townships. The last of these was in Ponte Tresa, at Lake Lugano's eastern point, where we ended our trip by participating in the unique running event known as the 'Girolaghiamo', a 7km trail-run around the lake with passports in hand as we ran through border crossings (including one by rollicking pontoon-bridge) between Italy and Switzerland, adopted countries of Butler and, by the end, three young Australians too.

[What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?](#)

There are many more famous places and tour-guides that we could have selected for travel in Italy



Tengia, oil painting by Samuel Butler, undated

or Switzerland – the Grand Tour of the nineteenth century almost never lingered in the region we visited, and Lord Byron, Charles Dickens or Henry James would have been far more classic choices. But we



Tengia, photo by Chloe Burnett, 2012

are at St John's, and two of the great good-fortunes of my time here is that I am a member (and currently Vice President) of the Samuel Butler Room Society, and also that it coincides with the two-year Samuel



Lago Tom, oil painting by Samuel Butler, 1877



Lago Tom, photograph by Mark Powles, 2012

Butler Project, which I have had the privilege to learn about and be directly involved in. Butler is an intriguing character. While best-known for his novels *Erewhon* and *The Way of All Flesh*, his core work was his increasingly isolated refutation of orthodoxy in the fields of evolution, religion, art history, music and the Classics. *Alps & Sanctuaries* is probably the best introduction to the thoughts, persuasions and passions of this unlikely protagonist in the overwhelming cast of Johnian alumni. It is also the only one of Butler's works where the complete set of original manuscripts, drawings and other documentation are held at St John's. So this expedition served as a superb opportunity to learn more about Butler, his relationship with St John's, the archives, a quirky guidebook and a beautiful part of the world.

The initial enjoyment came from planning the trip: unfolding cloth-backed maps from the nineteenth century, marked up with manifold red lines by Butler himself; leafing through albums of photographs and their surprisingly intimate focus on individuals and locations from a by-gone era; seeing the marvellous original drawings replicated in a far-inferior quality in *Alps & Sanctuaries*; traipsing around College in search of alluring oil paintings; reading aloud some of Butler's most outrageous claims – about the superiority of sparrows over nightingales and Handel over everyone, or the philosophy of rhubarbs and potatoes – and disbelieving that Ticino and Piedmont could be anything like this today.

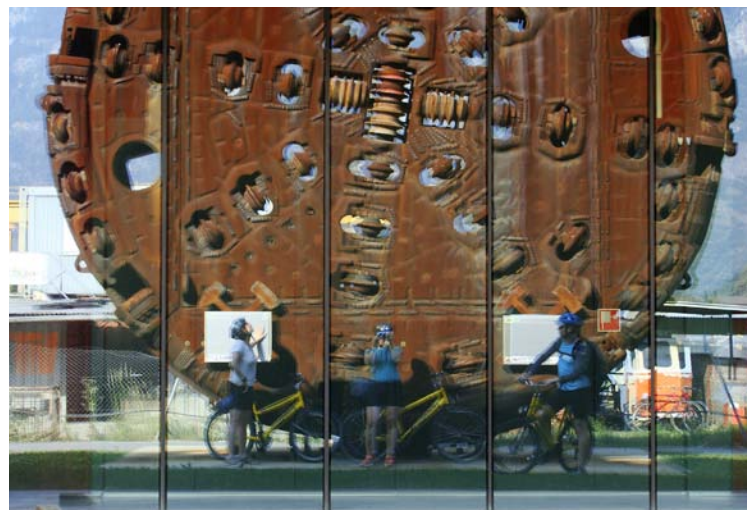
The second great enjoyment was that the trip worked so brilliantly. Butler, in my ears and mind's



eye morphed into an always opinionated, often cantankerous, but ultimately irresistible man with a top hat, trim suit, worn boots and lazy pipe, was a fabulous guide. He made us look, learn, think and talk. Following the turns of *Alps & Sanctuaries* brought purpose to our travels and provided an unexpected talking-point and connection to locals, particularly to Banz the cycling raconteur in Andermatt; Marie-Lou, a fellow reader of Butler in Italian in Primadengo; and Federica and Daniela, patiently and admirably chipping away at the long process of restoring Rossura Church. This latter discovery was one that surely would have delighted Butler, who counted this church and porch among his favourites. Primitive paintings in his preferred pre-Raphaelite style have recently been discovered in this church and works are underway to restore them to their former glory. Butler took us off the beaten track – both in place and in time. Without *Alps & Sanctuaries*, we would never have spent an afternoon wading through a swamp and pestered by gnats (persistent across centuries and generations) to reach a sketching place at the glorious Lake Tom, above the initially much more dramatic Lake Ritom. Nor, in all likelihood, would we have visited the centre dedicated to the staggering AlpTransit project to complete the largest tunnel in the world – the 57km Gotthard Base Tunnel, ploughing up to 2km deep and evaporating the entire region we travelled in the first week. We would not have witnessed the astounding 500m tunnel-boring machine or reflected

Left: Rossura Church, photo by Chloe Burnett

Right: AlpTransit tunnel boring machine, photo by Chloe Burnett



with the same intensity on the dramatic changes in engineering, science, travel and communication since Butler wrote his book immediately preceding the then ground-breaking 15km St Gotthard Rail Tunnel.

[What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?](#)

Mountains! Butler loved them. He lamented that he might not be able to visit them in old age, so we are certain that he would have readily adopted the funiculars and bicycles that were just around the corner. Nevertheless, even with such advances, mountains always present a challenge. One of our toughest days involved an arduous climb over Monte Ceneri. We had taken the wrong route after getting lost cycling from Locarno and already had a few hours riding behind us by the time we started on a steep and ragged pot-holed track of infinite switchbacks.



We were later told it was the old Roman road. It was tough climbing, the gnats were biting and our energy was low. Eventually, slowly, we reached the top. Forgetting to look for Butler's wild narcissus at the top, we gladly took the mountain bike tracks that plunged down the other side and into the Mendrisiotto. On arriving at the inappositely named dead-end town 'Riviera' and needing sugar, we stopped to buy some supplies and discovered, chillingly, no wallets and no passports. We had shown them when we visited the bike shop in the morning, and we suddenly realised we had left them on the train platform. Wearing and without a cent between us, I hurried into a shop to plead for the chance to call the station, five minutes before closing. We had to jump a train, but all ended well; this was Switzerland after all.

The second challenge was the cost of everything in Switzerland. Even with the generous travel grant, this was an expensive tour. Until 1840, Switzerland was the poorest country in Europe. Now it is the most affluent. We stole across to Italy and its drastically cheaper pizzas whenever we could, but of course, Switzerland made up for its prices with excellent bike paths, information and splendid sights.

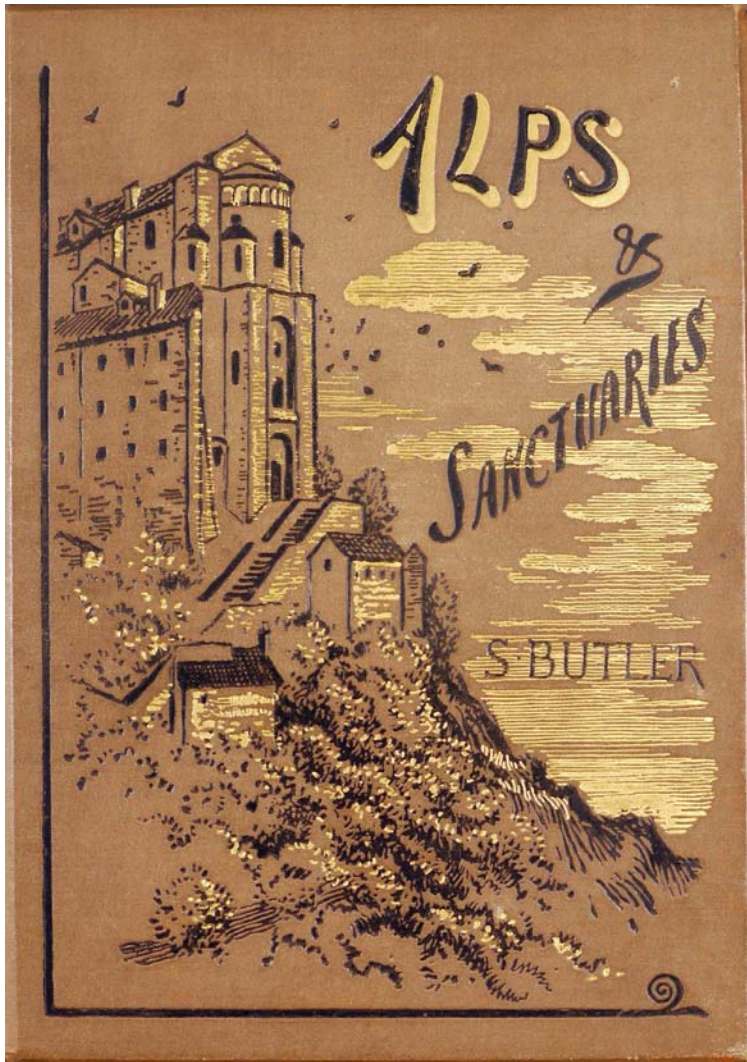
Finally, the challenge that was the most difficult was the eternal one: not having enough time. We did a lot during the trip and followed a significant proportion of the guidebook, but I would have loved to see more of the region, to spend more time

looking at the archives, to enjoy more whimsical Google Translated-versions of Italian websites, and to pursue exciting post-project ideas from re-issuing a digital version of the book and creating audio-guides to leading an SBR Society Study Tour. Satisfyingly, however, this expedition and its focus on *Alps & Sanctuaries* has provided one of the foundational elements of the Butlerama map on the online mapping site, HistoryPin, and I was also invited to give a presentation entitled 'Over the Range with Samuel Butler (and Some Remarkably Persistent Gnats)' in College on Butler Day in January 2013. For more on both of these, please visit www.joh.cam.ac.uk/samuel-butler-project

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

As a PhD student chasing down an increasingly narrow target with constantly diminishing expectations about how much you can read, write and learn, it was a delight and liberation to spend some weeks living and imagining a life that would no longer be possible today. For all his flaws and radical views, Samuel Butler had a crack at everything, and that I admire greatly.

My studies are in patent law, so rather far from Italy, Victorian literature and art history. Nevertheless, academically and personally I have learnt some great lessons from Butler – not to blithely follow the masses, to hold your convictions and express them clearly and with good humour, and to write and refine your observations on all matters, mundane to meteoric.



Cover of *Alps & Sanctuaries* (1882), Samuel Butler

Finally, let me express my enormous gratitude to the inspired donors, to the Johnian Society and the Roberts Fund for enabling this unforgettable experience, and to Rebecca Watts, the fabulous Butler Project Associate, for a year of absorbing and energetically responding to a relentless barrage of questions and ideas on all things Butler. I encourage all readers to look at the work of the Samuel Butler Project, to visit the places in *Alps & Sanctuaries*, and to question orthodoxy with panache.



Julia Powles' presentation given as part of 'Butler Day' is also available to watch online: www.sms.cam.ac.uk/media/1422280

Teaching English in the Zulu community of Sweetwaters, Kwazulu Natal, South Africa

by Justina Fehintola Oluwa Kehinde
Ogunseitan

Location: KZN, South Africa

Award: Johnian Society Travel Exhibitions & Wilberforce and Clarkson (Williams)

Dates: 17 August–23 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

During my time in South Africa, I worked with the charity Ithemba Projects, predominantly within the rural community of Sweetwaters as a primary and secondary school teacher. On a weekly basis, I taught children between the ages of 5 and 13 basic grammar skills at Mountain Home Primary School, such as sentence formation, basic letter writing and group activities including creating a class story. At Msimude High School I worked with the equivalent of Year 12 students, and we tackled subjects such as homonyms and homophones, as well as public speaking, wherein we held our own class debates. We also did a lot of work on poetry, a literary form that has a predominate place in Zulu culture. We worked on rhyme schemes and different poetic forms, as well as creating our own class poem.

During the week I also worked as a music teacher and assistant at the local Drop in Centre Creche, with children between the ages of one and five. I was a member of the support staff, helping the children with puzzles, games, and generating a creative, musical space for them to explore and engage with.

I also worked once a week at a local government hospital in downtown Pietermaritzburg in the township of Edendale on the children's ward. Many of the children there had either been abandoned or didn't have family members who could afford to visit. Alongside staff from the charity Zanini Bantwana, I played games with the children to keep them active and interactive, taught lessons, read stories and again used my guitar and singing to encourage creative expression as singing is also a vibrant part of Zulu culture. On Saturdays I worked again with Ithemba Projects and the Jabulani Kids Club and Khula Club, which are youth groups for the children and teenagers in the community. I led the worship for the beginning of the sessions, and then was involved as a youth leader supporting the life skills work, and playing group games with the children during the breaks.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I learnt in retrospect, that I was the first black, female volunteer to come and work with the charity since it had begun. I never realised that for a young Zulu boy or girl in Sweetwaters to see someone who looked like them but was at University and had returned to Africa to support and help them

would have such a positive impact. The children in Sweetwaters that I engaged with and taught were thirsty for education. They were also thirsty for role models that they could realistically emulate. Being able to see young boys who genuinely thought they were ‘too cool for school,’ and were more interested in flirting with girls, or working in the garage, staying late after school to do spelling tests and learn about poetry or how to write a formal letter was an incredibly inspiring moment for me. Seeing children with no social skills, shy or aggressive due to poor home relationships, coming alive when a song is played, learning how to sing songs or complete the alphabet was a quiet encouragement of the power of education and relationships. The trip wasn’t a life changing experience. Theoretically the situations I faced had already been described in Geography or Sociology textbooks. But being part of the slow but promising journey of sustainable long-term development that Ithemba Projects is fighting and striving for on a daily basis, was both a humbling and wildly exciting experience, which I long to invest in and develop as the years go by.

[What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?](#)

Knowing it had to come to an end was a very challenging and uncomfortable part of the project. For the intense period of time that I was fully immersed in the community, in the work, wholly consumed by the task at hand, knowing that I was leaving, and not just leaving South Africa, but leaving that very specific reality and having to return to university and

electricity and free health care, was a very jarring prospect. In the beginning, having to understand what compassion really entailed – being alongside people in their suffering – was a difficult lesson to learn. I was working with children who were Hep B, HIV/AIDS positive, and having them sneeze and cough and drool over me, was uncomfortable and disquieting to say the least – especially considering I didn’t have travel insurance. Yet as the days and the weeks went by, and I learnt to selflessly love them as humans who were dependent on me, knowing I had to leave them again was heart-wrenching. You invest so much of yourself emotionally that in the end your project appears redundant – you don’t want to be a poverty tourist, but inevitably, to some degree, the nature of the project forces you to be one.

[How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?](#)

I have always been fascinated by the relationship between oral cultures and scriptural cultures, the spoken word and the written. Being in South Africa, especially in Pietermaritzburg, a city that is still heavily segregated by race, and seeing the interaction between the oral Zulu culture and the scriptural English culture was fascinating. To see the impact of the written word on traditional education, the relationship between the Occident and the ‘traditional’ Orient in a sociological situation has deeply influenced my approach to this tension or this relationship within literature. I am intrigued by the concept of the ‘post-colonial’ and the emergence of a marginal voice, and that was very evident just by

working in Sweetwaters yet living in the completely white area of Hilton, and seeing the lack of inter-relation, but also the progress in attitudes towards multiculturalism since Apartheid and the emergence of the 'black voice'.

Personally, the trip has helped to hone my understanding of aid work and its pros and cons. It has exposed me to the real power of education and the need for minority students to return to their 'ethnic homelands', to put it crudely, and to invest in development. So often, the image that is reflected to the developing world is that aid is something aligned with race, and with that comes a particular view of history. I have since learnt how powerful it is when that lie is destroyed, and those in need realise that there are others 'like them' in positions of influence, power and authority who can and will help them.



I wrote a blog every day that I was in South Africa, which charts my daily experiences. It is brutally authentic and an immediate response to particular situations that I neither have space nor time to go into in this report, but if you are interested please visit: www.deathofthewriter.wordpress.com/ithemba

Ithemba Projects is a phenomenal charity, which is really striving to build strong and sustainable community foundations that will release the people of Sweetwaters into a viable, economically sustainable and communally progressive future. It would be such an encouragement to see this work grow, and

I would be excited to see how St John's could also start to work on creating sustainable and long term links with communities such as Sweetwaters, that its students have been a part of, to also see them grow and flourish.

Cultural crossroads of the world: A tour of the Levant

by Joseph Ataman

Location: Turkey, Israel and Jordan

Award: Parsons Fund

Dates: 2 August–13 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Having long held a fascination with the Arab world I was eager to see the region that has been at the centre of its history and culture. My travels took me from the Byzantine walls of Istanbul, to the cramped streets of Jerusalem, the checkpoints of the West Bank, the Negev desert and finally to vibrant Amman. I spent nearly a month exploring Israel and the Occupied Territories, spending time in most of the regional towns and cities before heading across the border into Jordan, where I visited Petra before ending my tour in Jordan's capital.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

The experience of travelling alone is second to none. While many fear the loneliness that seems so inevitable, really I found it presents the perfect opportunity to meet so many more people, both local and fellow travellers that I would

have otherwise never known. I was staggered by the generosity and hospitality that I was shown throughout my journey, most often from those that could least afford it. Several times, on the back of a conversation on a street, I was invited to have dinner and stay with complete strangers. I would like to think that I have learnt a great deal about people, people with the same fears and hopes on either side of the lines, both literal and figurative that divide this incredible land.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Without doubt, the hiccups that accompany any travel seem magnified when travelling alone. Even the most trivial of tasks can appear daunting when all the street signs are in Hebrew or the buses are only numbered in Arabic. Moreover, while my smatterings of Arabic were received warmly by all those I came across, I soon learnt that a smile would often get me much further. While I could think of many instances in which I felt challenged, they are undoubtedly part of the attraction of travel, experiences that I am sure I will draw on in the future.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

While I initially thought that my tour of the Levant would not be of direct relevance to my studies, I was fascinated to see how much of all that I come

Right: Temple Mount, Jerusalem



into contact with as a geographer happens in practice outside of the lecture hall or library. The Aida refugee camp outside Bethlehem was a unique insight into the lives of those Palestinians that still exist in a space undefined by borders or international recognition. Most importantly I consider that this summer has made me more confident about having my own view on the issue surrounding the conflicts of the Middle East. All that I have had the privilege to see and experience has given me the opportunity to form my own opinion regarding what I believe to be one of the most important concerns that my generation will face.



My journey into the Middle East was but the briefest glimpse at cultures and people that could stimulate a lifetime of interest. I hope that this summer was the first of many trips to the region that captivated me from the moment I stepped from the plane. I have no doubt that I will look back on this trip as an incredibly formative experience and a stepping stone for all that I hope to do in life.

Culture in the Netherlands

by Helena Barman

Location: Amsterdam

Award: Parsons Fund

Dates: 19–24 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

A short visit to the city of Amsterdam.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

Learning about the unique culture of Amsterdam, the jazz bars and the pride they take in amazing artwork and design.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Learning the art of regulated tolerance:

A stroll through any neighbourhood is rewarded with things that are commonplace here but rarely found elsewhere. Carillons chime quaintly in neighbourhoods selling sex, as young professionals smoke pot with impunity next to old ladies. What seems shocking to our society, in Amsterdam is regulated and tolerated. The Netherlands is a country that is very proud of being liberal and tolerant; at times during the Reformation and Counter-



Reformation, it was the only place where intellectual thought of any integrity was done. The sanctuary given to minds like Spinoza and Descartes only confers honour to the Dutch.

Having specialised in my final year in public economics, I take particular interest in how these 'evils' of society have been tamed in Amsterdam. Historically, toleration seems to have to fit three key themes: it can't harm anybody, it must be discreet and it must make money for the city. Yes, Amsterdam is known for its prostitution and tolerance of soft drugs, but I think England can learn much from its culture of thinking progressively about more mundane 'evils' such as pollution/transportation, immigration and freedom of the press.

Istanbul – At the crossroads

by Jack Bartholomew &
Fergus Hamilton

Location: Istanbul, Turkey

Award: Parsons Fund

Dates: 23–27 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Having landed on the Asian side we crossed the Bosphorus by boat, encountering the unforgettable skyline of Istanbul much as visitors have done for millennia. The quayside at the Golden Horne made for something of an encounter of its own, hawkers flogging cheap plastic amusements or vendors of grilled corn stood next to the immaculate and recently installed tramway, all in the shadow of the sixteenth-century New Mosque. This contrast, of old and new, sacred and secular, brash and refined, perhaps is the only way of trying to begin to describe Istanbul.

Our experience, admittedly, was confined largely to the old heart of the city; indeed Hagia Sofia made the impressive backdrop to our hostel's rooftop bar. It is in the centre that the most has been preserved, and even here this is largely confined to mosques and palaces with precious few private or commercial buildings. The Ottoman city was vast, but largely wooden, making the urban fabric

peculiarly vulnerable to fire and, perhaps more so, 'developers'. Sadly much of the city is of recent, ugly and unimaginative construction.

This, however, would be an unfair characterisation of the city more widely. Istanbul is clearly a city looking towards the future, through a unique lens. The tramway is brand new. The airports are as good as any in the UK and on the way from them to the centre you will find new flats, offices, shopping centres and mosques. The Islamic character of the city was more striking than I had anticipated. Despite Turkey's secular nature and Istanbul's liberalism, the vast majority of women in the centre wore headscarves. Interestingly and against my presuppositions, in the less prestigious suburbs, one saw fewer headscarves. The culture of coffee is a powerful one and confectionary represents a delicious and distinct culinary force. We did our best to not frequent the endless identikit tourist restaurants, although we weren't hugely successful in this regard. Our forays beyond led to highs: delicious lambs and salads and more equivocal experiences such as spiced-offal baguettes – better than they sound (but not much).

If quotidian architecture lets Istanbul down, the monumental sweeps it aside in its magnificence and antiquity. Hagia Sofia is even more impressive in the flesh than in the innumerable images of it that I had seen. Seeming to swell up from the ground like a great pink tor, it floats above the skyline. Inside, though broken by the chains holding chandeliers, the vistas are awe-inspiring, that it is close to 1,500 years old only adding to the sense of wonder. It is



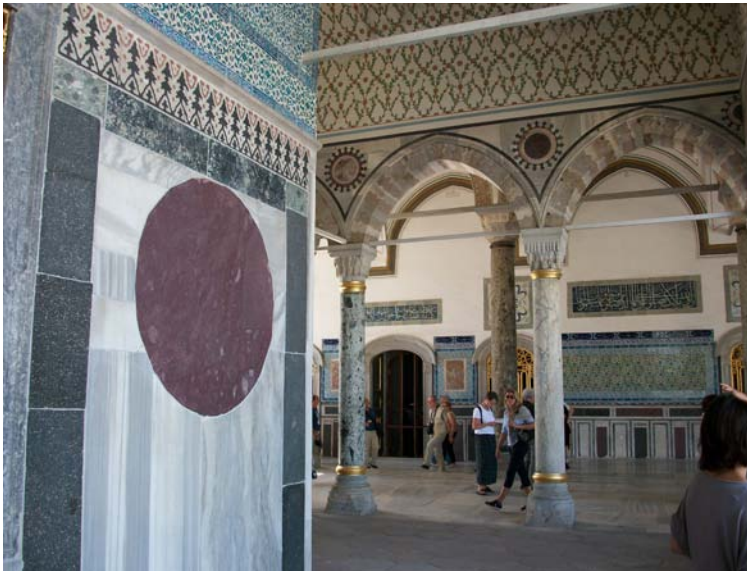
also a monument to the importance and dangers of preservation. Much of the ceiling and the walls are covered in unimaginative yellow and ochre pattern resembling, as one friend put it 'the sort of decor one might reserve for the toilet of a holiday house'. This was testament to ravages of iconoclasm that these sections, one alive with mosaics, had been denuded. On the other hand, what is so fantastic about the space is the mixture of Christian and Islamic art, prompting also reflections on their shared religious personages. Archangels and Mary preside over what was once the altar, whereas the main body of the building is dominated by vast round wooden disks, bearing the names of the Islamic prophets in beautiful and intricate calligraphy. Only through change and destruction could this space acquire its unique aura.

Hagia Sofia is joined by a panoply of mosques, any of which elsewhere would be a central tourist location. The Süleymaniye and Blue mosques were both exquisite, not to mention enormous. Information about Islam in a variety of languages was available at the Blue Mosque, which struck me as an excellent idea, where better to bridge the enormous gulf in knowledge for most Westerners and the Islamic world. Language was another reminder of Istanbul and Turkey's unique position between Europe and the Middle East. As well as a range of European languages, Chinese and Japanese, Arabic and Persian were very common at tourist attractions, something fairly unusual in Western Europe. The presence of Greek guides also paid tribute to the 3,000-year presence of Greek civilisation in Istanbul, sadly

brought to end in the 1920s with the population transfers agreed to in the Treaty of Lausanne.

The only practising Orthodox church we were able to visit was on the so-called 'Princes' Islands', a pretty and easily accessible archipelago, much-frequented by tourists and local day-trippers. Rugged, warm and breezy, these islands are the ideal antidote to a few days of heat and bustle in Istanbul proper. Taking one of the innumerable horse and carts, bedecked with plastic flowers and little mirrors, we made our way up the hill to St George's monastery, the highest point on any of the islands. It had remained relatively isolated for centuries, sparing it the turmoil visited on so many of the Greek communities in the Ottoman Empire (not to mention Turkish communities in what became Greece). One couldn't help but feel, however, that had that isolation extended a little longer, to the extent that no one introduced them to multi-coloured fairy lights, that this particular chapel may have presented a more solemn aesthetic than it did.

This was not the only example where sometimes the old ones are the best. The Topkapi and Dolmabahce palaces make striking contrasts. The Topkapi, for all that it was a by-word for luxurious extravagance and monolithic imperial splendour, actually seemed a very 'liveable' palace. No grand facades like Versailles or the contemporaneous Hampton Court, shaded patios, exquisite reading rooms, cool and ventilated and rambling living quarters all held their charm, despite the hoard of tourists (of whom we were of course a part). The



Top: Interior of Topkapi
Above: Exterior of Dolmabahce

Reliquary was something of a highlight, if not quite for the right reasons – whilst relics never seem especially convincing to my secular and sceptical mind, I think even the most fervent devotee would rightly wonder why Joseph’s turban was quite so clean, how there was quite so much of Mohammed’s beard and why anyone saw fit to preserve Abraham’s saucepan for posterity. Nevertheless, this was again a pertinent reminder of the shared heritage of the three Abrahamic religions. The Dolmabahce, by contrast, was a nineteenth-century French-designed pile of monstrous proportions. Built as a demonstration of the modernity of Ottoman sultans in the 1850s (contributing to the later bankruptcy, which left the Empire at the mercy of the Westerners they sought to emulate) it occupies an uncomfortable position in the memory – should we simply admire an ostentatious but nevertheless splendid palace, applaud the open-mindedness of modernising Sultans in this city of all the world, or feel unalloyed sadness at the denigration of the refined Ottoman courtly culture in the abandonment of the Topkapi for something resembling an overgrown Parisian post office? Indeed, questions, rather than answers, are all one can expect from a visit to a city of such antiquity and of such a rich, varied and fascinating history.

I would like to end by thanking the College for the opportunity to visit Istanbul. This is only a sample of some of the sites we visited and the food-for-thought this trip, itself only capable of offering a tiny sample of one city, gave us. I urge anyone of broad interests to put Istanbul high-up on your ‘places-to-see’ list.

Gender in post-Tito Balkan nations

by Victoria Buchholz

Location: Croatia, Slovenia

Award: Parsons Fund

Dates: August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

My goal was to travel to the Balkan republics in order to further pursue my studies on gender, and to investigate how the status of women has changed since the disintegration of Yugoslavia. I arranged to interview young women in order to research how their gender and youth identities have evolved in light of the political turmoil that accompanied their formative years. From 1945–1990, Yugoslavia was under communist rule, repressing the nationalism and religions of the countries that in the early 1990's became the independent Balkan nations of Serbia, Bosnia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Croatia. During that time, under Marshal Tito, gender equality was an explicit policy goal of the pan-Slavic communist Yugoslavia. I was most interested in assessing how women perceived their own political and social status during Tito's time and during the years following Yugoslavia's collapse. To investigate, I interviewed women who are of university age now and who grew up in post-communist Croatia,

Slovenia and Montenegro to determine their views on gender equality and opportunity now versus the opportunities of their mothers, who grew up during the communist period. I also conducted qualitative interviews with older women whose life trajectories were very much influenced by Yugoslavian politics. I ended up conducting interviews with a few men as well, who also gave important insights into how the disintegration of Yugoslavia affected their lives, and more specifically, how they viewed women.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I especially enjoyed hearing first-hand accounts from the interviewees, a few of whom I spent an entire day with. They were very fair-minded about the realities of communism, both for gender roles and also for how society functioned as a whole. They could see both the positive aspects (for example, there were fewer nationalistic disputes between many of the countries) and the negative aspects (for example, if a man's wife attended church, he was essentially barred from government employment). Many interviewees also displayed a great sense of humour about their experiences. A woman named Oya told me: 'When communism fell and my father showed up at the office, he was expected to work. He was in shock for five days.'

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The Croatian War of Independence, though it ended in 1995, is still a very sensitive subject in former Yugoslav nations. It destroyed up to 25% of the economic infrastructure, resulted in the deaths of tens of thousands of civilians, and heightened awareness of (often minute) differences between inhabitants. I was told not to ask about the ethnic cleansing that occurred, and was advised that it may be best not to discuss the war at all. However, when I encountered interviewees who appeared willing to address the conflict, I carefully and gently probed their thoughts and recollections, as well as their perceptions, of other ethnic groups. For example, I asked many Croatian women if they knew any Serbians (or people of Serbian origin living in Croatia). Most replied 'yes'. I then asked if they considered any Serbians to be friends. Far fewer older women than younger women reported having Serbian friends. It was also surprising to hear just how quickly these women could tell where a person was from – small details, such as the pronunciation of a word, could give someone away. One young woman told me that she didn't know of any other countries that were so similar, yet hated each other so much! It was challenging to try to extract as much information as possible while still being sensitive to divisions that are clearly still quite powerful.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This project has been tremendously valuable – I came away with new ideas that I plan to incorporate in my course this year (one paper I am taking is

specifically focused on social constructions of gender) and also in my other intellectual pursuits. While I approached the project trying to understand how gender norms in this area of the world might be different from other areas, I found myself making more and more comparisons to other nations that had formerly been under communism, such as Estonia. I also grew more interested in the institution of marriage itself, which I observed to be of severely diminishing importance in former Yugoslav republics. Marriage rates in Croatia and Slovenia seemed to be inversely correlated to gains in women's rights. This has to be understood within the wider spectrum of rapid political and social changes that have occurred in the last few decades. These countries are still emerging, still struggling to find an identity within the modern European community, and still differentiating between what divides a man and a woman, a Croat and a Serb, a Bosnian Muslim and a Bosnian Christian. I think this makes them unique compared with other European countries, and I hope to explore these complexities and perhaps write about my impressions in an article or an essay.



I am extremely grateful to St John's and the donors who made it possible for me to undertake this project. It was one of the highlights of my undergraduate study, and I am excited to find a way to best utilise my experiences.

Visit to the German Aerospace Center

by Irene Dedoussi

Location: Berlin, Germany

Award: Parsons Fund

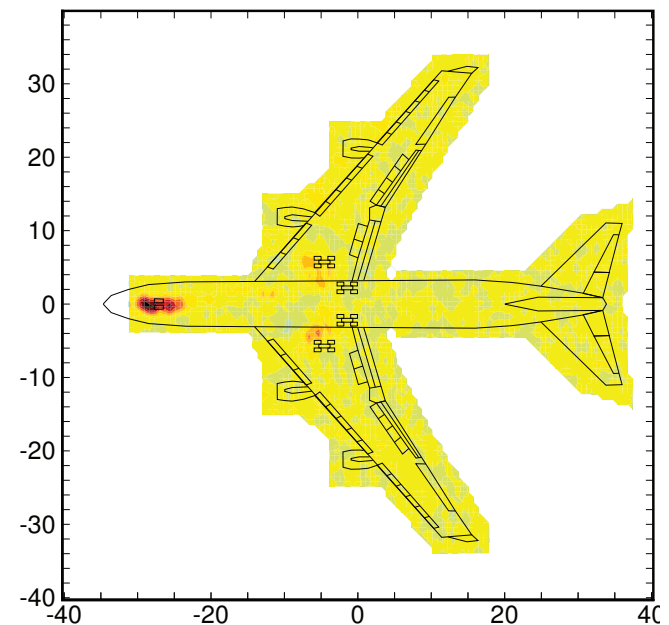
Dates: 10–19 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

This travel grant involved a visit to the German Aerospace Centre (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und

Raumfahrt – DLR) in Berlin, Germany in August 2012. The aim of this visit was to provide a closure to the work undertaken over the fourth year project, as part of the Part IIB Engineering Tripos. The project was in collaboration with a research scientist from DLR, Dr Henri Siller. The topic was 'Landing gear noise analysis of a Boeing 747-400', and it involved examining the experimental data collected from aircraft fly-overs, performed by DLR, in order to test the various noise qualities of the aircraft.

The analysis was concentrated on the nose and main landing gear, and very interesting results regarding the scaling of the noise power with speed,



as well as the tonal properties of the sources, were produced.

The purpose of the visit was to discuss and present to DLR the results obtained during the course of the project, and using their feedback to further develop and explain the conclusions.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

The time spent at DLR, apart from enabling an easy transfer of the confidential data used for the part IIB project back to DLR, provided a great opportunity to obtain very useful feedback regarding the research done, as well as useful suggestions regarding future work.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Given that I had done a 10-week internship in DLR Berlin the previous summer, the difficulties faced this time were much fewer. Being able to understand technical engineering terms in German still remains something to work on.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

As mentioned previously, this visit provided very useful feedback and suggestions regarding future work. These are now going to be implemented and possibly presented in the 19th AIAA/CEAS Aeroacoustics Conference (34th AIAA Aeroacoustics

Conference) in Berlin, Germany. Given that I am planning on following a career in research, this opportunity has definitely assisted my personal development.

London to Zagreb: the bicycle diaries

by Joaquim d'Souza

Location: Europe

Award: Parsons Fund

Dates: 14 July–4 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

My travelling partner Alex and I generally cycled and camped to cover the distance between London and Zagreb. Camping only really involved pitching a tent and cooking on a camping stove, which by the end of the trip we were both pretty proficient at. While cycling we had to navigate with a paper map and compass; unfortunately despite these tools we still got lost on a fairly regular basis. Surprisingly, medium-sized towns were the worst – too large a scale to show all the roads, and no smaller scale map as with the cities.

In most of the cities we used www.couchsurfing.com to find free hosts. This was incredibly successful, with us finding a host in seven cities along the way (Lille, Luxembourg, Strasbourg, Basel, Zurich, Venice and Pula).

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?



Our experience of couch-surfing was overwhelmingly positive. We became friends with all of our hosts, who were all incredibly interesting (eg a man who cycled around the world for four years).

The journey itself was also really enjoyable. Here are some highlights: cycling over the Gotthard Pass in Switzerland (which has an altitude of over 2,000m), camping without a tent in Italy and Croatia, and, of course, finally crossing the finish line.

The best part of the whole journey, however, was Venice. Firstly: Venice is an amazing place – it's like a maze that people live in and yes there is a lot of tourism but it's not hard to get away from it. Secondly: Alex plays jazz piano, so on our second day there we had a look around for a café with a piano. We found

one, and Alex ended up playing there every day in exchange for bottomless coffees.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Cycling over the Alps was probably the hardest thing I've ever done. It was basically cycling up one really steep hill for five hours (for the whole ascent from about 500m to 2,000m – the pass itself took about 45 minutes).

One day in Switzerland we got caught in three different storms. Everything was drenched, including our tent and sleeping bags, so we didn't have much fun sleeping that night.

Finally, once we didn't buy dinner early enough so all we had to eat was energy gel.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This project has convinced me to learn a second language, because I now believe that people being multilingual is essential for a united world.

The trip also inspired me to travel as much as I can, preferably by bicycle.

From myths to masterpieces: An artist's journey through ancient Greece and Italy

by Michael Ha

Location: Greece and Italy

Award: Parsons Fund

Dates: 8–26 July 2012

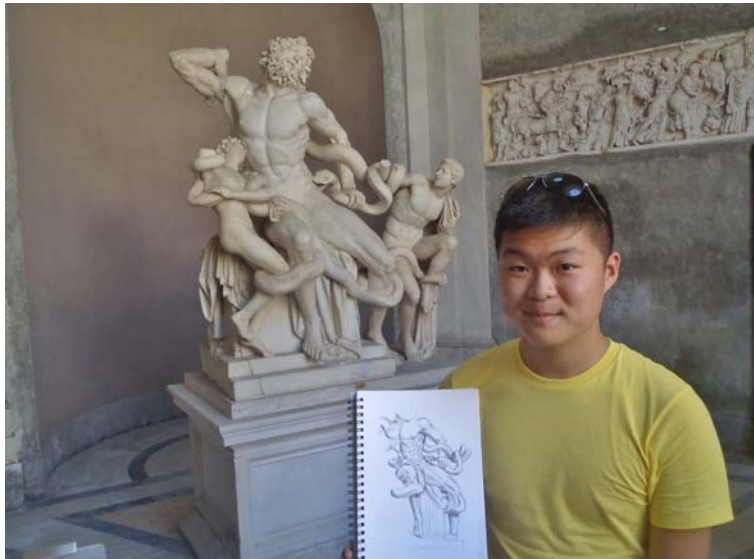


Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

In the summer, I went backpacking through Greece and Italy. I completed an 'Art-a-Day' project as I travelled, which was inspired by the local environment, culture or historical feature that I had experienced in whatever city I may have been in at the time. This mainly involved filling out a scrap book to visually portray the journey itself.

I initially landed in Thessaloniki, Greece, where I spent two days sketching the local ruins and landmarks, as well as visiting the Archaeological Museum of Thessaloniki. I then travelled by train down to Athens, passing Mount Olympus as I went. Once reaching Athens, I was able to visit the Acropolis, a citadel that rises above the city. Here, I was able to see the Parthenon, the Erechtheion and the Temple of both Poseidon and Athena. During my stay, I was also able to visit and sketch the Acropolis Museum, the Panathenaic Stadium and the Temple of Zeus. The next day I took a day tour to see Delphi, the home of the Temple of Apollo and the tale of the Oracle.





I then travelled to Rome via train and ferry and explored the main archaeological and artistic sites. I was able to stop and sketch by the Trevi Fountain, the Spanish Steps and in some of the churches and piazzas along the way. The next day, I visited Vatican City, where I was able to see some sculptures such as the Apollo Belvedere and Laocoön and His Sons, as well as visiting the Sistine Chapel and St Peter's Square. I then travelled up to Florence, where I was able to see Michelangelo's 'David' and explore the surrounding area of Tuscany, including Pisa and Siena. Then taking the train up to Venice, I was able to explore St Mark's Basilica and the iconic scenery of interweaving canals and gondolas. Finally, I went west to Milan, where I was able to experience the Duomo and the high fashion that represents the city, before returning home.



What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

One of the aspects of the journey I enjoyed the most was the freedom to create art as I wished. Back home, it is rare to have the chance to spend an extended period of time devoted to creating art pieces uninterrupted. On this trip, I was able to fully immerse myself in the experience of the trip and have it completely inspire whatever art may arise from it. This ultimately led to me enjoying seeing all the sites themselves, especially as I have spent much of my academic art life studying them only as pictures in books. To see them in the flesh was a difference experience altogether.



It's hard to plan every detail of the trip before you go, as you have no one else to rely on. This was made much worse when something didn't go to plan. The concept of constant travelling also puts a kind of stress on you that I can only liken to being in exam term. It's that constant anxiety and feeling of unease whenever you land in a new city, that you can't really ever settle and you have to constantly be considering how you are going to travel to your next destination.

[How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?](#)

Though not directly related to Medicine, I feel the trip has helped me mature due to the responsibility I had to take on for myself.

It taught me independence and how to react

when you are completely on your own and simply have to look after yourself. It also taught me the ability to change my plans as and when necessary, and how to think on one's feet. This can occur when trains or buses are cancelled, and your first action shouldn't be to panic, even if it's your train to the airport in London before your journey has even begun!



I would like to thank the College and all the sponsors that gave me this opportunity to experience all the art I feel so passionately about. I wouldn't have been able to do it otherwise.

Finally, I was able to meet some amazing people on my travels. With each hostel I stayed in, I was originally worried meeting people would be harder alone. I couldn't have been further from the truth, as everyone in hostels is of a similar age, all eager to make friends and share stories with other travellers. It's an odd experience to have a constant stream of fleeting friendships, but one I thoroughly enjoyed.

[What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?](#)

The most difficult challenges I faced during my travels mostly stemmed from the fact that I was travelling alone, something I have never done before.

From the Pergamon to Puccini: Architecture and music in Berlin

by Aasha Joshi

Location: Berlin

Award: Parsons Fund

Dates: 12–14 June 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Over the course of the 2012 long vacation, I made a short trip to Berlin to study music and architecture. I visited several museums of international significance, including the Pergamon Museum, the Neues Museum, the Ethnological Museum (which is the surprising home to a feathered cape once belonging to Kamehameha I, unifier and first king of the Hawaiian islands) and the Musical Instrument Museum. Also, I attended a performance of *Tosca* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, and I made my way around the abandoned and decaying Planterwald amusement park.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

While at the Pergamon Museum, I stood at the entrance to a wonder of the ancient world, the Ishtar Gate, entreating an unseen (i.e. non-existent) gatekeeper to open guarded doors for me. I pleaded,

in almost full volume, the very words that Ishtar spoke during her mythical journey to the underworld. She asked for gates to open in Babylonian, and so did I. It was a fun moment. Well, fun for me, at least. Judging from their sideways glances, a few of the other patrons were a bit startled. Most visitors, though, were wearing headsets connected to the museum's free audio guides and were undisturbed (I hope).

I first practised Ishtar's speech, quietly, during my flight from London to Berlin, using a professional audio recording as a pronunciation guide. The Babylonian text, English translation, and audio recording of *Ishtar's Descent* are available, at the time of writing, on the University of Cambridge's website at www.arch.cam.ac.uk/~mjw65/baplar/itars-descent-to-the-netherworld-lines-1-125-read-by-martin-west.html

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Thankfully, the trip was rather straightforward. The most challenging aspect of the visit was editing my itinerary to a feasible number of activities.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Although the links among music, architecture and my own academic studies in social psychology are not immediately obvious, the disciplines share a common foundation. In part, social psychology is concerned with the schemas by which people

frame their understandings of objects, settings and interactions – a topic pioneered by Johnian psychologist Sir Frederic Charles Bartlett (1886–1969). These understandings can influence and be influenced by one’s social and material environment. Bartlett discussed the ways in which elements of an environment might be transmitted from one group to another¹, and nowhere was this clearer than at the Pergamon Museum, where entire buildings were exported from ancient Greece and Babylon and re-erected in the heart of urban Berlin. Buildings from the age of antiquity, like the museum’s eponymous altar, inspired architects such as Greek Revivalist Karl Friedmann Schinkel (1781–1841), whose own buildings serve as powerful archetypes both in Berlin’s architectural milieu and, more generally, in the embodiment of ‘incremental’ rather than ‘monumental,’ ‘generic,’ or ‘enclosed’ urban forms². The visit to Berlin provided an unrivalled opportunity to view artefacts and buildings, and listen to musical works that are emblematic of social concepts.



I am grateful to the generosity of St John’s College and to the Parsons Fund. Through their support, this trip to Berlin was made possible.

1. Bartlett, FC (1923). *Psychology and Primitive Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

2. Aureli, P V (2011). ‘City as political form: Four archetypes of urban transformation’. *Architectural Design* 81(1), 32-37. Retrieved on 31 October 2012 from www.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ad.1186/pdf

Political issues of repatriation visualised: A comparative case study of the installation of the Euphronios Krater in the Villa Giulia at Rome and the Parthenon Gallery in the New Acropolis Museum at Athens

by Jessie Lipkowitz

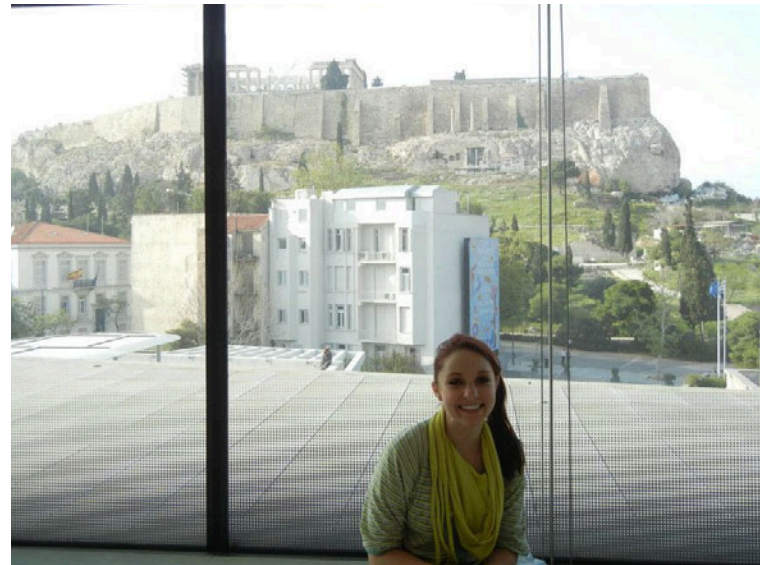
Location: Rome and Athens

Award: Parsons Fund

Dates: 27 March–18 April 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

This project explored how political issues, mainly those of repatriation of antiquities, visually manifest themselves within the context of museum spaces. It was concerned with how museums become both platforms for and venues of contestation and raises the questions of how ownership and identity materialise within different displays. The two main case studies for comparison were obvious: the Parthenon Gallery in the New Acropolis Museum at Athens and the representation of the Euphronios Krater in the Villa Giulia at Rome. The former was in many ways intentionally designed to allude to both the absence



and promise of return of the 'Elgin Marbles' by Britain. The Euphronios Krater pays lip service to the opposite end of the political spectrum. It is set up in a gallery (almost) of its own – an installation in celebration of its recent return (to much acclaim in Italy) by the Metropolitan Museum in New York. These particular examples are embedded within a much larger and controversial debate that will be contextualised in my dissertation through supportive visualisation/analysis of other museum displays and exhibitions including: The Duveen Galleries in the British Museum, the previous display of the krater in the Metropolitan Museum, and the exhibition that was first staged in Rome to commemorate the return of the Euphronios Krater, *Nostoi Capolavori Ritrovati*. My dissertation exposes these display environments through a more detailed interrogation than previously



encountered, pursuing questions of curatorial intent, public perception and global politics within a broader legal and historical framework, and will employ qualitative methodologies. The majority of the repatriation debate is consumed by politics – my dissertation attempts to disentangle this approach and re-orient the debate in strictly museological terms. Its implications impact on questions of archaeology, museology and politics more broadly.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

During this project I was able to interview the Director of the New Acropolis Museum, Dr Dimitrios Pandermalis as well as two archaeologists, who were actively involved in the repatriation of many Italian

artefacts, including the Euphronios Krater, Maurizio Pellegrini and Daniela Rizzo. All three were so gracious to meet with me to share their experiences. This level of collaboration for understanding the display of repatriated objects was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Due to the political and economic climate in both Greece and Italy, in addition to the sensitive nature of my work, it was extremely difficult at first to solidify interviews and establish collaboration with museum staff. However, as mentioned above, after several months of networking I was able to meet with some fascinating people, who greatly influenced my research.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

My ultimate goal is to practice illicit art trade and cultural property law. This project allowed me to gain insight into the ‘repatriation debates’ that largely consume this field from an entirely new perspective.

Byron and Orientalism in literature

by Patrick O'Grady

Location: Turkey

Award: Parsons Fund

My aim for my travels in Turkey was to research the Eastern imagery prevalent in Byron's hugely successful *Turkish Tales*. My dissertation focuses on these images, arguing that they are not simply added to create a generic vision of the exotic.

My arrival in the chameleon of cities – Istanbul, Constantinople, Byzantium – has not been exactly that of Byron's hero Don Juan. The most striking difference being that I was not immediately transported to a slave market. However, we ended up at the same place: the Harem of the Topkapi Palace. The word is Arabic in origin, *haram* meaning a 'holy, forbidden place'. It is no wonder that the minds of Western travellers feasted on such mysterious exoticism. Needless to say, daily life in the Harem was not, it seems, what nineteenth-century paintings such as Delacroix's *Sardanapalus* would have us believe. The sultan did not lounge draped in silks whilst hordes of naked women prostrated before him. In fact, the women brought to the Harem were enslaved girls from conquered Christian lands, selected for their intelligence and beauty, and inducted into an education programme consisting of writing, music, dance, embroidery and study of the Koran. In the

armoury of the palace, I found a sword that fits the description of a type of sword commonly found in the Ottoman Empire, mentioned in Byron's own notes.

I then travelled to Canakkale – the place where Byron swam to when crossing the Hellespont in imitation of the heroic feat of Leander. I arrived in the town for the annual celebration in honour of Byron, when many locals attempt to swim across from Europe to Asia. Of his achievement, Byron wrote in a letter to Francis Hodgson:

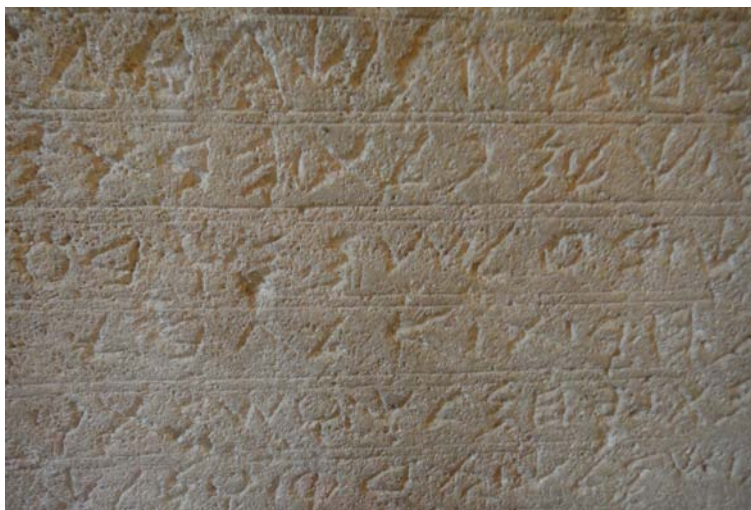
'I shall begin by telling you, having only told it to you twice before, that I swam from Sestos to Abydos. I do this that you may be impressed with proper



The Hellespont, which Byron swam across in one hour and ten minutes

respect for me, the performer; for I plume myself on this achievement more than I could possibly do on any kind of glory, political, poetical or rhetorical.'

Byron also wrote a poem about his achievement entitled *Written after Swimming from Sestos to Abydos, May 9 1810*. The town of Canakkale is near to the remains of Abydos, the setting of his poem *The Bride of Abydos* on which I focus my dissertation, and near the remains of Troy, the importance of which is a key aspect of my dissertation. Byron was affected by the emptiness of the plains of Troy, writing that 'The only vestige of Troy, or her destroyers, are the barrows supposed to contain the carcasses of Achilles, Antilochus, Ajax, etc.' However, excavations since the late nineteenth century have uncovered many



The first primitive alphabet developed by the Phoenicians living in Byblos

layers of habitation and it is now a UNESCO heritage site.

After this, I travelled to Ephesus, which had less of an impact on the young Byron. However, the ruins of the cathedral built over the tomb of St John reveal that if it had not deteriorated it would still be one of the largest cathedrals in the world. The tomb stands at the bottom of the Nightingale Hill – the nightingale being one of the key symbols I am considering in my dissertation. In Ephesus itself, I visited the library of Celcis, renowned for its reconstructed facade. From Ephesus I travelled to Pamukkale, site of indescribable calcium travertines, and then to Cappadocia, a moonscape due to the erosion of the rock to form 'fairy chimneys'.

From Turkey, I flew to Beirut – UNESCO World Book Capital City 2009. I arrived within an hour of the Pope, who delivered an open air Mass in the city calling for peace between the various factions in the country and in neighbouring Syria. I had been planning to visit Bcharre, the birthplace of the author Khalil Gibran, but the northern city of Tripoli and some suburbs of Beirut had seen anti-American protests and violence due to the anti-Islamic film released in the US. As such, I instead visited Baalbeck, which boasts some of the largest and best-preserved Roman ruins in the world, and Byblos, the town that gave the world the rudiments of the modern alphabet system. As a result, the city lends its name to the Bible from the Greek for 'book', itself tracing its name etymologically to the papyrus the city imported from Egypt.



The Golan Heights and the Sea of Galilee from Um Qais

I finally flew from Lebanon to Jordan. I visited the ancient city of Umm Qais, the site in the Bible where Christ expelled demons from a local man. It is located at the point where the Israeli border, the Sea of Galilee and the occupied Golan Heights meet. Israel and Syria were visible in the valley beneath the ruins, and the area is steeped in Biblical sites such as Mount Nebo, as well as the present sites of so much political conflict. Travelling south, I visited Wadi Rum, the pass through which Lawrence of Arabia famously lead the Bedouins, and then Petra, which inspired John William Burgon's poem describing 'a rose-red city half as old as time'.



Patrick O'Grady's blog, which contains a full day-by-day account of his travels and many more photographs, can be found at:

www.travellertoanantiqueland.wordpress.com

Youth Music Theatre: UK – Project Cuba

by Chloe Rush

Location: Plymouth

Award: Parsons Fund

Dates: 4–16 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Youth Music Theatre: UK is a national theatre organisation for young performers, composers and writers, which runs several productions across the country each summer after auditioning in the spring.

Project Cuba was one of YMT: UK's productions in 2012 and offered the opportunity to create a new music theatre production alongside professional directors, musical directors and choreographers. This production focused mainly on working with actor-musicians to create a unique piece of music theatre.

The plot follows the true story of the Lopez sisters who decided to form an all-girl band and play in the clubs in Cuba's male-dominated society in the 1930's through to the 1970's. It shows their utter determination to succeed not only against society's expectations but also against their own father's wishes in a challenging political environment. The sisters decide to form a dance band and take Havana by

storm playing music of a range of styles – jazz, rumba and salsa.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

To have the opportunity to work alongside other like-minded individuals was extremely fulfilling. It was also a privilege to work with such a distinguished creative team – some members had previously worked on West End productions. The actor-musician aspect of the project was relatively new to me, and I really enjoyed taking on such a diversity of roles within the creative process.

Prior to attending the project, I knew little about the music of Cuba and loved having the chance to delve further into the country's fascinating culture, looking at the relationship between the political situation and the effect this had on musical directions at the time.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Many of the musical styles we were working with on the project had a heavy focus on improvisation – something I had not previously tried and initially found quite difficult. It was a challenge that I'm glad to have taken on and it has helped me develop a skill that I'm sure will come in useful in the future.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

I believe it has furthered my musical development greatly, not only by allowing me to work so closely with leading musical directors and composers, but engaging with music from another culture has been very interesting and may be something I wish to pursue later on in my undergraduate degree in the form of a dissertation.



I'm extremely grateful for the generous funding that gave me this fantastic opportunity.

The legacy of the Knights Hospitaller in contemporary Maltese healthcare

by Adam Whyte

Location: Malta

Award: Parsons Fund

Dates: 18–24 July 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

The aim of my trip was to examine the impact of the Knights Hospitaller on contemporary Maltese healthcare.

The primary focus of my project was visiting the Sacra Infermeria or Holy Infirmary of the Knights Hospitallers of the Order of St John, which was one of the most well-known hospitals in all of Europe during the Renaissance, having been founded in 1574 by Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller, Jean de la Cassiere. The Sacra Infermeria provided an essential keystone in my examination of the Knights' legacy, by offering a tangible example of the practices and methods of the Knights Hospitaller in the context of modern Maltese society. Viewing the Lazzaretto hospital on the fortified Manoel Island, however, was a crucial point of reflection on how contemporary issues can affect essentially what today is tantamount

to the 'commissioning' of healthcare resources, and that any healthcare system must be examined in the context of the needs of the population at that time.

Finally, visiting the Mater Dei Hospital in Swatar provided an invaluable insight into the contemporary Maltese healthcare system and allowed me to explore whether there truly was any evidence of the Knight's' legacy in a thoroughly modern hospital.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

Experiencing Malta and becoming familiar with the culture and the people was the highlight of the project for me. The eclectic mix of heritages and traditions brought to the island created a fantastically different culture and having the opportunity to explore this in the context of the island's history and medical system was incredible.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of the project was translating how the cultural values of so many diverse ethnic and social groups that had come to the island over the course of five centuries, applied and related to today's means of healthcare delivery on the island, specifically regarding the Knights' legacy. The beginning of the Knights' involvement on the island in 1530 had followed centuries of Arab rule, and the subsequent arrival of the French – shortly followed by the British – at the beginning of the nineteenth

century, created a collection of tangled institutional and religious traditions that had to be unravelled and understood before any examination of the Knights' own legacy could be undertaken.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Currently there is substantial emphasis of the importance of global health in today's medical education, and my trip to Malta certainly gave me an interesting insight into this important field. However, I personally felt that the most beneficial aspect of this project was that it made me more aware of the impact and legacy of historical events on the delivery and practice of contemporary healthcare, and how these historical events can shape the current attitudes and needs of a population regarding the allocation of and access to medical care.

To the fringes of Mesopotamia: Archaeology at risk

by Charles Draper

Location: Turkey

Award: Robert Sloley Fund

Dates: 18 July–30 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

During the 2012 Summer long vacation, I accepted the invitation of Dr John MacGinnis (University of Cambridge) and Dr Tim Matney (University of Akron) to participate in excavations at the Neo-Assyrian site of Ziyaret Tepe (Ancient Tushan) in south-east Turkey. I spent five weeks at the excavation, before leaving to explore nearby sites of historical and archaeological significance across Eastern Turkey.

Soon to be flooded by the newly-dammed waters of the River Tigris, Ziyaret Tepe is one the few Assyrian cities to remain accessible to archaeologists following the 2003 invasions of Iraq. The invitation to work at this site thus presented an unrivalled opportunity to explore the physical geography and archaeology of the region. Replete with palaces, temples, preserved watercourses and administrative buildings, the site served as an important military outpost for the Assyrian Empire, which stretched –

at the height of its power – from central Turkey to Iran, and from the Black Sea to the Sudan. Previous discoveries at Ziyaret Tepe include lavish cremation burials, city walls, monumental buildings, and even archives of ancient Assyrian texts. One such document elicited worldwide attention by indicating the existence of a previously unknown language, while another, penned during the collapse of the empire, recorded the city's dwindling supplies, ending with the prophetic words, 'Only death will come of this!'

While at Ziyaret Tepe, I was assigned a variety of roles. I served as a trench assistant for Operations V and W in the Lower Town, directing local workmen to their tasks and meticulously recording their discoveries in the site's database. I also assisted with a magnetic gradiometry survey of the site's south-eastern sector, which allowed the team to generate a ghostly image of subterranean features such as walls, cobbled surfaces, pits and burials. Finally, I helped the site's zooarchaeologist, Tina Greenfield, to reformat her catalogue of nearly 6,000 bone fragments. This allowed her to gain new insights into the eating and butchering habits of the ancient Assyrians.

After the season's work was concluded, I left to explore sites of archaeological significance along Turkey's eastern border. Here I was accompanied by fellow Johnian Orla Polten, who flew out to Turkey having completed a summer internship in the UK. Together we travelled to Lake Van (where we found the stunning rock-cut inscription of Darius







the Great), Doğubayazıt (a stone's throw from the legendary resting place of Noah's Ark, Mount Ararat), and finally to the ruins of Ani, the ancient capital of Armenia. Collectively, this exploration allowed me to visit various important regions of the Caucasus and Near East, and provided invaluable insights into intersections of geography, history and politics.

[What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?](#)

Excavations at Ziyaret Tepe were highly rewarding. In the upper town, several new rooms of the palace were revealed, including a vaulted structure thought to be a tomb, and a bathroom complete with under-floor watercourses. In the lower town, the remnants of a building – tentatively identified as a barracks – were exposed. This was found to contain numerous clay tokens used by Assyrian bureaucrats as an aide-memoire. A nearby cuneiform tablet was also uncovered. This recorded the exchange of livestock. Elsewhere in the lower town the skeletons of four individuals were unearthed. These included a well-built male in his forties, buried with pots containing semi-precious beads, two cylinder seals, a stone pendant and an amulet depicting the Egyptian god Bes. Above all, it was the friendliness and enthusiasm of the team that made working at Ziyaret as enjoyable as it was. Although we arose before sunrise each day (usually before 3:30am), energy levels remained consistently high. We found time for trips to the neighbouring settlements of Mardin, Hasankeyf and Urfa, and even



managed to catch some of the London Olympics on Turkish state television.

[What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?](#)

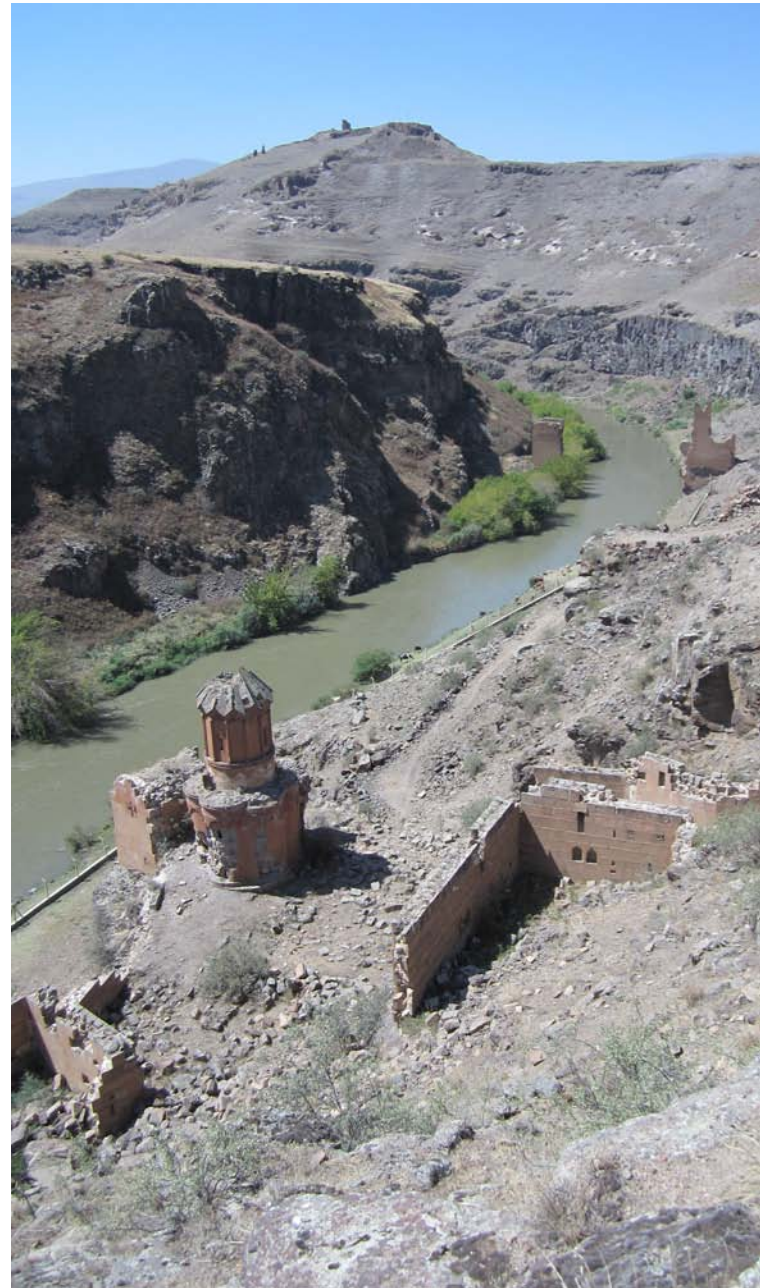
The Middle East has been politically volatile since ancient times, and it was clear from the outset that south-eastern Turkey would not be a straightforward place to visit. While at Ziyaret, we heard daily reports of roadside bombs, military manoeuvres close to the Syrian border and growing international concern. Misogyny and racism were ubiquitous, nationalistic propaganda rife and conditions of poverty intermittently harrowing. Thankfully, the drama of the newscast contrasted dramatically with experiences of day-to-day living at Ziyaret Tepe. For most of the town's inhabitants – the farmhands, the bakers, the barbers and the shopkeepers – life in the region continued much as it had done for hundreds of years.

[How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?](#)

St John's is a college with a global vision and a global reach, and nowhere is this clearer than in its generous travel bursaries. These enable hundreds of students to expand their vision by undertaking worthwhile projects across the country, continent and globe. St John's is particularly fortunate to be endowed with generous grants to assist students of



pre-classical archaeology. These offer extremely valuable opportunities for students in an increasingly competitive field of study. In 2010, a grant from the College allowed me to undertake Palaeolithic archaeology at the cave site of Vela Spila, while funding extended in 2011 allowed me to gain first-hand experience of archaeology in the Levant. Through my course I have read about the history and archaeology of these regions, but travel has conveyed a level of understanding and appreciation that no textbook can replicate. As I begin my postgraduate studies as an Ertegun Scholar at the second best university in the country – the University of Oxford – I can say with certainty that it is to St John’s that I owe both my place and my funding. I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to the College and its governing body for their generosity, as well as for the many opportunities they provided while I was an undergraduate. I for one shall be heeding our College’s ancient motto: *‘Souvent me Souvient!’*



Along the coast: Early evidence for the Neolithic in the Iberian Peninsula and its implications for the spread of agriculture in Europe

by Suzanne E Pilaar

Location: Spain

Award: Robert Sloley Fund

Dates: September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

The nature of this trip was exploratory, as I began to consider new paths of research following my PhD dissertation research. Whilst my current research focuses on the Mesolithic period in the Adriatic (with a widely variable date range of approximately 12,000-7,000 years ago) I am also interested in the transition between this period and the Neolithic, which is usually identified archaeologically through the presence of domestic animals and plants as well as pottery. Because there is some evidence for the 'spread' of the Neolithic upwards along the Eastern Adriatic coast, I was interested in learning more about this change at sites elsewhere, along the Mediterranean coast. Through my travels, I was able

to familiarise myself with the landscape, environment and archaeology of the southern Spanish coastline.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

The landscape was fascinating to me, as the environment is more arid than that of coastal Croatia where I had previously worked. The mountains are also considerably higher in elevation, so it was interesting to consider these differences in the situation of archaeological sites in the region. The caves in Nerja are some of the most impressive I have ever seen, and even had Palaeolithic rock art, in addition to archaeological evidence for domestic animals and pottery beginning as early as 6,500 years ago.

One of the highlights of my trip was travelling up to the city of Granada and visiting the Alhambra (see photo). I found the palaces truly inspiring. As an archaeologist I study prehistory but I am also interested in historic sites and am passionate about heritage conservation and management. This world heritage site is a prime example of a place with a well-preserved, multi-layered history that is also showcased and maintained in a way that emphasises the changes which have taken place through time, from the preserved ruins of former outbuildings to the exquisitely restored architecture of the palaces from the Islamic and Christian periods.



What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The devil is truly in the detail, and in this case it was the transportation. I was driving a rental car to travel along the coast, and experienced a flat tyre late at night. Of course there was no spare, so the car had to be towed all the way back to the airport (over an hour) in order to fix it. Along the way the tow truck driver was pulled over for talking on his cell phone and he also had problems with the fuel injection going up and down the mountainous terrain. Luckily, the car company replaced the car without too much trouble once we finally arrived! Otherwise the trip went off without a hitch, and all along the way people were always very helpful.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

I feel as if I have learnt so much more about not only the geography and archaeology of the region of Andalusia but also Spanish cultures, past and present. Because one of the main aspects of my research is studying ancient foodways, it was great fun to try out the modern day cuisine! I now have a better understanding of the nature of the Mesolithic and Neolithic archaeology of coastal southern Spain, and will be able to consider this newfound knowledge in my forthcoming research projects.

In Search of the Callahuaya

by Rahul Rose

Location: Bolivia

Award: Roberts Fund

Dates: 8 August–19 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

The Callahuaya, or *medicos viajeros Bolivianos* (Bolivian travelling doctors), are an itinerant group of traditional healers from the Andean valleys near Lake Titicaca, who traverse old Inca trails throughout Chile, Peru, Bolivia and Argentina, providing herbal and magical cures. My interest in them has grown greatly over the past years. I first ‘encountered’ the Callahuaya in the not very far off surroundings of the University Library’s Rare Book Room. While studying the interactions of European science and indigenous Andean knowledge, I repeatedly came across Western explorers who in their writings spoke of benefiting from the wealth of medical knowledge provided by the Callahuaya. For example, the anti-malarial healing properties of the quinine-yielding Cinchona bark were known to the Callahuaya long before Europeans reached South America. And yet, very little is known about this nomadic group.

I travelled to Bolivia with one central objective in mind: to discover more about the enigmatic Callahuaya. Through Dr Rodriguez-Larralde, an

anthropologist I had met earlier in Brazil and who is now working in Bolivia, I was able to volunteer with biomedically trained medical professionals who worked in the Bolivian section of the Andes. In the course of my volunteer work I spoke to local villagers, most of whom were fluent in Spanish as well as Quechua. These villagers helped me arrange meetings with nomadic Callahuaya healers. They also acted as translators – translating from Quechua to Spanish, the latter of which I have some proficiency in.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

The project was enjoyable as I was able to see first-hand much of what I had read about during my research in England. The pages of historical and anthropological texts were enacted before my eyes. But I think what I enjoyed most was travelling off the beaten track. Much of my previous travel in South America followed set routes, well trodden by travellers. I always felt as though I was repeating some set menu pre-made for Europeans travelling in Latin America. Here, in a remote part of the Bolivian Andes, there really was little in the way of a set tourist trail. I enjoyed the sense of adventure that accompanied this fact.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

I had to cope with a large deal of disappointment – the result of setting overly ambitious aims. When planning the trip I decided to learn Quechua in order to complement my Spanish. This was to a large

degree a failure. I was able to learn only very, very rudimentary Quechua, none of which came in use in Bolivia, as I could not make myself understood, nor could I understand what anybody said.

In addition, before leaving England I had arranged to meet a local man who claimed to know personally many Callahuaya healers. He had offered to act as my guide. When I arrived in Bolivia he did not show up. This was quite a setback, and I had to establish contacts with healers through villagers I met through the volunteer work I did with local allopathic medical professionals.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Although I have taken a break from academic studies, this trip to Bolivia has provided me with a rich source of data and experiences that I can use for the basis of future research projects when I resume my studies. What is more, living in a remote part of the Andes has furnished me with first-hand experience of ethnographic research – the methodological backbone of anthropology. This will be useful if am able to do a PhD in the future.

On a personal level, I think the experience of adapting the structure and aims of my project to meet continually shifting circumstances has been a highly useful experience. I now realise that sound plans engineered in Cambridge will fall apart and be remade when exposed to the shifting uncertainties of the field.

Early Christianity in Morocco

by Alice Eleanor Carr

Location: Morocco

Award: Scullard Fund

Dates: 11–27 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Although religion is very much part of the face of Morocco's public discourse, my intention was to study the oft-overlooked subject of early Christianity in the country. Academic research was supplemented by fieldwork; I began in southern Morocco and travelled northwards, towards Europe, where signs



of early Christianity grew. Unfortunately I found that much of what was interesting to note about early Christianity was in its absence; what was noticeable was just how little evidence of the presence of early Christianity in Morocco there was. In retrospect this should not have come as a surprise. Christianity was seen in Morocco as coming part-and-parcel with invading forces from the North. It was curious to see how this did not apply to all religions outside of Islam – Chefchaouen, an idyllic mountainous town in northern Morocco, for example, banned Christians but it did not ban Jews. It was curious to see how some buildings could change not just denomination but religion over the centuries. Over time, buildings built with the intention of worshipping Christianity would be used to worship Islam. It was interesting that this was exactly the opposite of what happened in southern Spain after the Moorish conquests. Naturally, there were exceptions. Tangier, for example, still has its dominant Church of Saint Andrew.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

One of the most enjoyable aspects about my research was that it provided a lens with which I could view the country and its people and everything these two had to offer. Morocco is a land of contrasts, and my research encouraged me to interact with real people in the country. This led to unforgettable experiences and relationships that I will cherish.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?



One aspect that I found challenging about this project was the language barrier. With no background in Arabic, I had to rely on my French, which was useful in southern Morocco, but as I progressed further north, French gave way to Spanish as the second language of many, which posed problems.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This project has encouraged me to appreciate the importance of fieldwork as a method of research to supplement academic study.

Florence to Naples: The Renaissance and Baroque compared with Early Modernism and the present

by Claudia Fragoso

Location: Florence, Rome and Naples, Italy

Award: Scullard Fund

Dates: 23–31 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

The aim was to obtain a first-hand experience of Renaissance and Baroque architecture within its cultural, social and environmental context. My trip started in Florence, passed through Rome and finished in Naples. I was also very interested in comparing the nature and usage of public space within these three cities, particularly how their surrounding architecture contributed to their definition.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

My travels commenced in Florence, which was where several Renaissance innovators such as Leon Battista Alberti flourished within their careers. Witnessing Alberti's architecture (e.g. the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, photo to the right) reinforced





his theoretical approach towards design; a very strong example of how the Renaissance prioritised the building's proportional form and symmetry. Interestingly, the incidental and irregular nature of the public spaces that occurred by the cities' most significant buildings went against this notion of prioritising forms. This juxtaposition gave the city a wonderful dynamic.

Rome was the only city that I had visited before. The city presents a very rich and extensive amount of both Renaissance and Baroque architecture. I had the advantage of being able to select key sites that I felt were particularly relevant towards exemplifying the contrast between the aforementioned styles. Upon visiting D Bramante's Tempietto in the Chiesa di San Pietro in Montorio and C Maderno's Santa Maria della Vittoria on the same day, it was overwhelming to take in such contrasting approaches towards the representation of a sacred space.

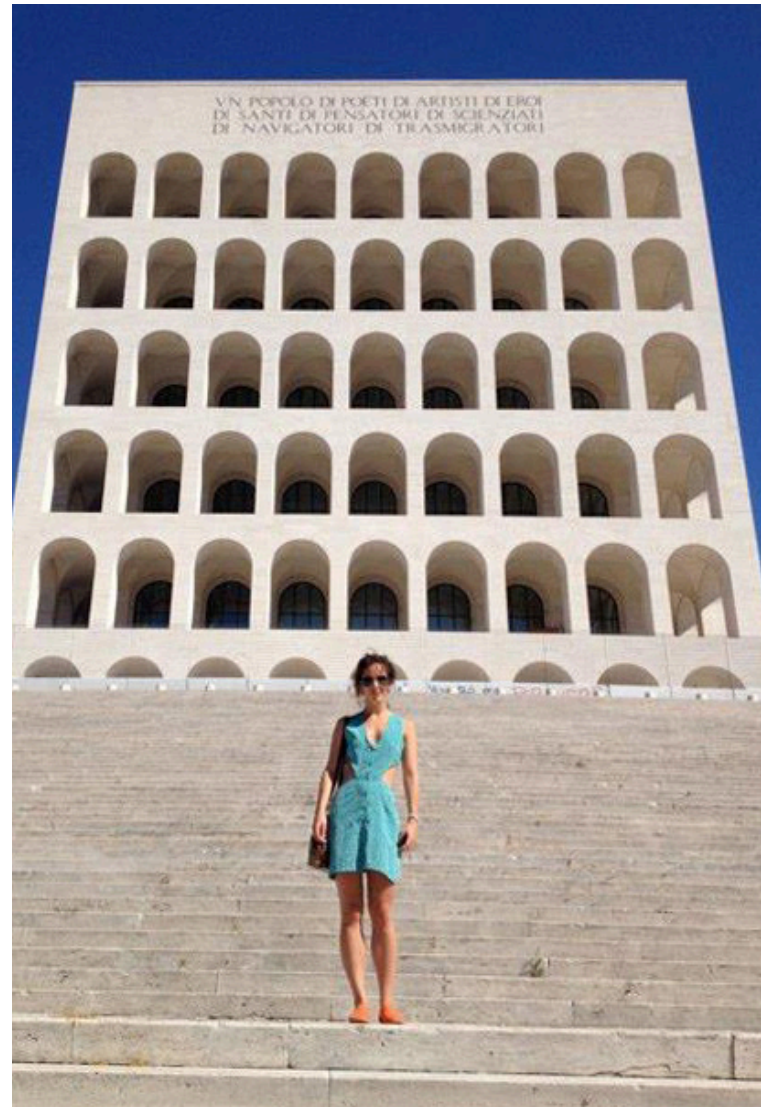
Finally, I concluded my trip in Naples, the home of Baroque architecture. Though I had never visited Naples before, I enjoyed exploring and understanding the Baroque at its most intense. G di Conforto's Pio Monte della Misericordia is the home to Caravaggio's *Seven Works of Mercy*, a painting that makes full use of light and dark techniques in order to strengthen the dramatic and emotional qualities.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

This project was very enjoyable and I wouldn't categorise any aspect of it as challenging; the only difficulty I encountered was having to endure the heat!

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

The purpose of my travels was to contemplate the parallels between the Renaissance focus on ideal proportions and tranquillity with the Baroque's powerful feelings of excitement and irregularity. This kinetic architecture provoked thought where Renaissance subdued it. It was interesting to simultaneously think about the trends that reassessed Early Modernist in the 1920s; its strict parameters led to prioritising the building's form and appearance rather than its function. This notion was not particularly long-lasting because better designed required more consideration towards human use. Rather than form, successful modernism was more related to the functionality of a building or space. The architectural and infrastructural differences between these three cities made this trip extremely fascinating and enjoyable. Not only did it strengthen my understanding of Renaissance and Baroque architecture but the nature of their development and growth has taught me relevant factors of how architecture is shaped today.



Religious and cultural history in Israel

by Felicity Osborn

Location: Jerusalem and Galilee, Israel

Award: Scullard Fund

Dates: 7–17 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I travelled to Israel with a group of Cambridge Theology students to explore the cultural history of the region where the Abrahamic faiths originated. We organised our own itinerary for the trip, visiting numerous religious sites and museums. This gave us the freedom to see a huge variety of churches, mosques (such as Temple Mount), and to see the ancient architecture in Jerusalem's Archaeological Park. The Holocaust Memorial Museum was an extremely moving experience, in particular the memorial specifically for children killed in those tragic events. One of my personal highlights was travelling the Via Dolorosa through the ancient walled city early in the day before the city awakened. Some notable leisure excursions included a hike up Masada to watch the sun rise from the infamous ancient town and a visit to Ein Gedi National Park and the Dead Sea.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

There were some wonderful moments on our trip; I particularly loved reading the biblical story of Jesus' journey through Jerusalem on the way to Golgotha while walking along the route he is said to have travelled. Reading about the events on which my own faith is founded, where they happened, brought my faith to life. I also enjoyed watching Jewish expressions of prayer and worship at the Wailing Wall and seeing the multitude of prayers written on paper and stuck into the wall. It is a site of such significance and holiness that it was a privilege to be able to stand there. Visiting Hebron, described in more detail below, was also a huge highlight.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Our day trip to Hebron was a stark reminder of the reality of Palestinian life in a tense, ever changing world. The huge wall separating Israel and Palestine, which is still in the process of being built, was a daunting physical reminder of the divisions that urgently need to be bridged in the Middle East. People here live courageously, with their livelihoods often balanced on a knife edge. While I learnt much about the history of Israel and loved that process, I also love learning about people in the world now. Seeing some of the reality of Palestinian lives, Israeli settlements and citizens armed with machine guns, casts a challenging light on my reading of the news now I am back in the UK. We heard incredibly difficult stories

from families and I was struck by the complexity of the political situation in Israel and Palestine. Diplomatic dialogue to overcome such deep seated political and historical differences is difficult to foresee.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This trip enabled me to see the context in which early Christianity developed, and how it related to its pre-existing culture. Walking through the streets of Jerusalem, travelling through Hezekiah's tunnels, visiting the Garden of Gethsemane – being in all of these seminal biblical locations enabled me to see afresh the church history and New Testament studies that I have read so much about. My personal faith came to life again in a place filled with such rich cultural and religious significance. I was reminded of the sacrifices people have made for their religious beliefs, and how religion permeates cultures of every era and location.



I would like to thank the College and the Scullard Fund specifically for their financial support in making this trip. It was a fascinating, wonderful experience, which I will continue reflecting on as I complete the Theology Tripos. I hope to travel back to Israel in the next few years, and am watching closely to see how the political situation there develops.

Tour of Rome's historical sites

by Rebecca Thomas

Location: Rome

Award: Scullard Fund

Dates: July 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I spent a week with fellow students in Rome at the beginning of July. A must-visit city for any historian, we saw the famous sites such as the Colosseum, the Vatican and the Pantheon, but also travelled further afield, to Ostia Antica, to see the ruins that tourists often miss. We had the opportunity to soak in the atmosphere at the beautiful sites of the city, such as the Piazza Navona and the Piazza Trevi, but also to witness the majesty and awe-inspiring Altar of the Nation and the uniquely English culture at the Keats-Shelly memorial.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

The city itself never ceased to amaze me; the abundance of ruins and architectural treasures was astonishing, as was the way they were scattered randomly around the city. It was visiting the Colosseum that I found the most satisfying, as it had figured prominently in my studies of Roman history and it was quite something to be able to walk around

and to see it in person. Needless to say, it did not disappoint! I also found the visit to the Keats-Shelly memorial simply incredible. It was astonishing to see the survival of a small pocket of English culture at the heart of what was the centre of the Roman Empire.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The biggest challenge was probably deciding what to prioritise! With so much to see and so little time, and with the weather so incredibly hot, it was frustrating at times, especially when we missed a train or didn't make it to a certain attraction before the closing time. The problem with Rome is that you could always spend more time there!

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

The project has been immensely valuable in more ways than one. It assisted in my studies of royal courts, with Rome of course being at the heart of the Roman Empire, and seeing the ruins and monuments that we'd studied in class was a truly inspiring experience. Furthermore, I feel that it has aided my studies this year of the decline of Roman Britain; it all appears far more relevant than it would if I were simply reading a textbook!



I would like to thank the Scullard Fund for the generosity in assisting me to fund this trip. I feel as

though it has enriched my studies, but it has also given me the opportunity to visit for the first time one of the most fascinating places in the world. Without the help provided this would not have been possible.

Icons at St Catherine's, Mount Sinai

by Lucy Wrapson

Location: Sinai, Egypt
Award: Scullard Fund
Dates: 20–27 May 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I travelled with art historians Professor Jaroslav Folda, Professor Betsy Bolman, Dr Ann Driscoll and Agnieszka Szymanska to the monastery of St Catherine's, Mount Sinai, Egypt, with the kind permission of the Archbishop Damianos and the monks of the monastery. The purpose of the visit was to assist Professor Folda in understanding the materials and techniques of icons using my training and experience as a paintings conservator.

Staying at the monastery guesthouse, we were able to examine icons from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries specifically with a view to understanding the methods of gilding used in the chrysography on the saints' robes.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

The opportunity to see this unique collection of icons was wonderful, as was the chance to spend time in the monastery,





to attend church services and to talk to the monks. Under normal circumstances, it is only possible to visit the monastery for about an hour after climbing Mount Sinai overnight.

Nowhere else on earth do so many early icons survive, largely due to the iconoclasms in the Byzantine period that destroyed icons elsewhere. Having the time to examine the icons so closely and to discover new things about Byzantine painting techniques was a unique experience.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Egypt is currently in a state of considerable flux, which meant that it was necessary to be vigilant while travelling. It was necessary to bring all our own water to the monastery, given its desert location, and we were fairly isolated during our time there.

Uncovering wholly unknown and new information about painting techniques was challenging and exciting.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Professor Folda is writing a book about chrysography on icons and early Italian painting. I will be contributing a chapter on technique to this Cambridge University Press publication in 2013.

India: A Himalayan adventure

by Robert Green

Location: Ladakh, India

Award: Ulysses Travel Fund

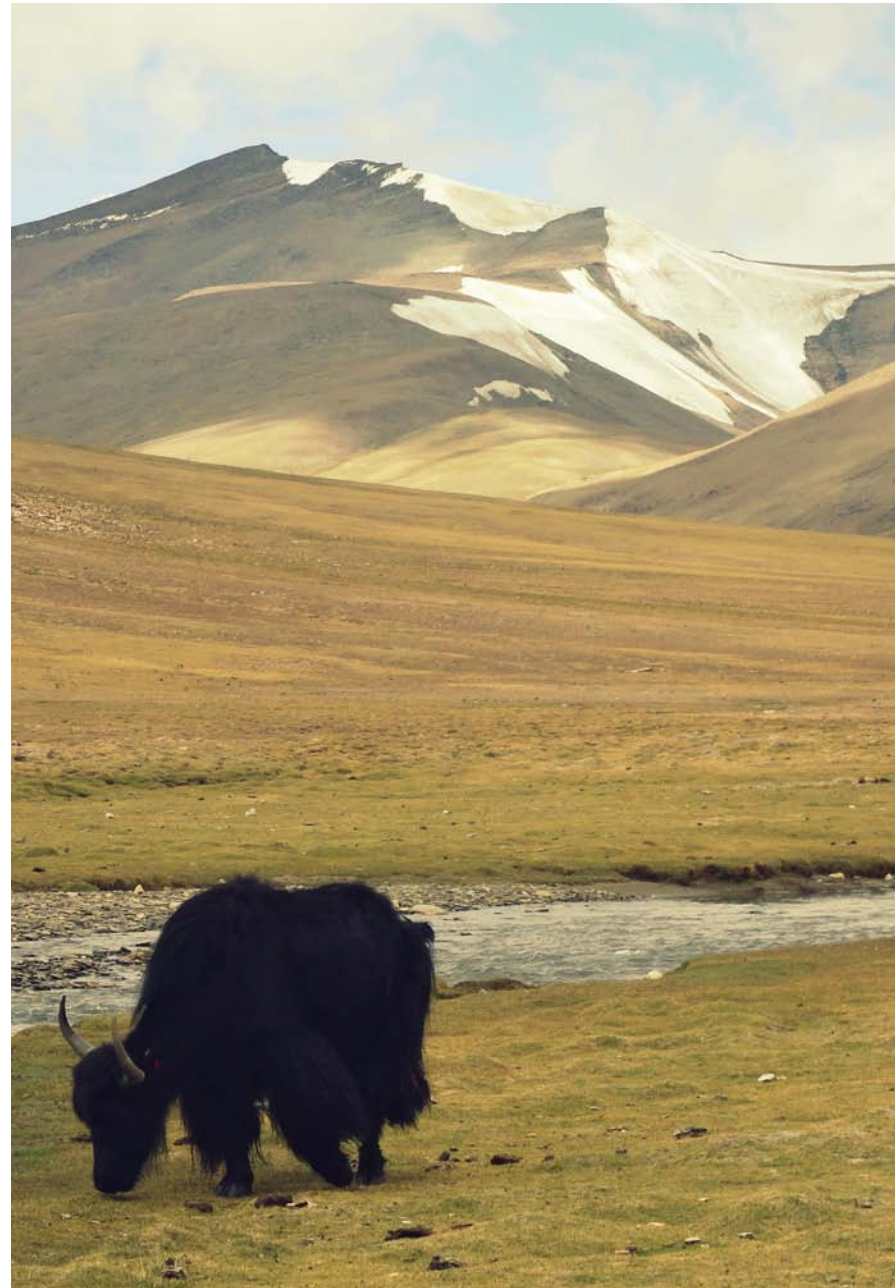
Dates: July–August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I intended to explore the remote landscape and the cultures of the indigenous and refugee peoples living in the most northern state of India. To the north and east lies the contested border with Tibet, and the army presence is dominant here. The people that live in these cut off valleys are largely refugees from Tibet, and indigenous Ladaki peoples whose ethnicity is similar to Tibetans. Our main activity was to embark on a long nine-day trek through inaccessible highland areas where many of the Ladakian tribes and nomadic people live a remarkable way of life.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

One of the things I most enjoyed was experiencing how these hardy people manage to survive in such a harsh and rugged landscape. We visited in the comparatively warm summer but the night was still biting cold and the vegetation sparse across the dry landscape.





These peoples' ability to look after and use their livestock (mainly yaks and goats) to provide for their families was very impressive, and their endurance hard to match as they marched their herds far and wide in search of good grazing.

[What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?](#)

One of the most challenging aspects of the travel was the physical challenge of trekking at such a high altitude. While I have some experience of climbing at 6,000m, sleeping at 5,200m caused some medium-level altitude problems, which it took a lot of mental determination to stick out and do my best to acclimatise to.



[How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?](#)

This trip hugely helped me to develop my people skills by time and time again presenting us with difficult dilemmas and issues aside from the wilderness trek. Organisation of logistics often proved slow, and travel plans were often disrupted. Over this time I learnt that patience and simplifying a complicated dispute is always the best way when trying to resolve things. Though there were a number of instances of people trying to trick and cheat us, we completed our trip safely and without being conned.



Undergraduate
Academic
Research
Projects

An investigation into the culture and politics of the Border Reivers, 1585–1603

by Oliver Barnes

Location: London

Dates: 12 July–3 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

As part of my tripos, I am writing a dissertation investigating the Anglo-Scottish border in the late Elizabethan period.

This is a subject undergoing much revision. The borderlands were once envisaged as a lawless society and an embarrassment to the English nation. Historians are, however, beginning to see that the borderlands were in fact relatively settled and enlightened.

The key to understanding the borderlands is to examine the veracity of the sources involved. So by being in London I could access not only archived state papers, but also collections of ballads, printed in London, which offer a distinct perspective on the border.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I enjoyed a hands-on approach to the past. The first two years of the tripos at Cambridge are totally dependent on secondary reading. This offers a very one-dimensional perspective on the past. History is not the study of real people living real lives, it becomes the study of historical opinion.

So I was unleashed upon some archival material. Reading the words, the letters and the papers our ancestors leave us give unique insight into a ‘world we have lost’.

Using actual archival material is essential. By examining the handwriting, or signatory mark left by a historical actor, one can investigate numerous themes. The most obvious of these is literacy. The extent of the archival material and the amount actually written by native Northumbrians implies that literacy was a fairly common phenomenon in the period.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

By their nature archives lead us down a certain path. In the main I was using state papers. This means native Northumbrians were writing to (and receiving letters) from their political masters in London. This meant they conformed to London’s standards and ideas. The state of the border is expressed in (with a slight exaggeration) a foreign language. It is, therefore, a challenge to understand what borderers really felt. One has to be creative. One has to look for the facts

and inferences that contemporaries reveal without necessarily intending to.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Interacting with archives has given an insight into 'real history'. I now appreciate historical method far better than I previously did. It is the closest one can get to the past. It brings the fact that history is made by real people, living real lives, into sharp relief.

I know I am a better history student because of my time spent reading the words of our ancestors.

LSE Summer School 2012: An Introduction to English Law

by Gavin Bennison

Location: London School of Economics and Political Science, London

Dates: 2–20 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

My project involved attendance on a three-week Summer School held at the London School of Economics, entitled 'An Introduction to English Law'. The Summer School, over the course of 58 one-hour lectures and two examinations, sought to introduce students to the principal branches of English law, their central doctrines, historical evolution, philosophical/theoretical underpinnings and pertinent contemporary debates. The scope of issues considered in lecture was enormous, including assessing Lockean justifications for the extension of private property rights to intellectual products; considering whether the fiduciary duties owed to beneficiaries by trustees are unduly onerous; critiquing the 'Paramountcy principle' underlying family law; analysing legal attempts to regulate cyberspace (by drawing on emerging schools of thought such as 'cyberlibertarianism'); and reviewing the internal consistency of the law of homicide by reference to philosophical justifications of

punishment. In addition, the course gave a thorough grounding in the operation of the English legal system, considering, for instance, the implications of the doctrine of precedent; the English court structure; statutory interpretation; criminal and civil procedure; and the ongoing shifts towards deregulation and greater pluralism in legal business structures. All lectures sought not only to teach the law itself, but also to critically consider the degree to which English law reflects and responds to the changing nature of modern society. In other words: is the law fit for purpose?

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

The most personally enriching aspect of the Summer School, and an aspect which I had not foreseen, was the inspiration it gave me to consider the inter-relations between geography and law, and the possibilities for fruitful interaction between these two disciplines, which will make up Part I and Part II of my BA degree from Cambridge. In particular, the lectures in intellectual property, environmental law and traditional property law, addressing issues such as the types of property right that may be created in land, struck me both as having an intrinsically spatial dimension and as exercising a powerful influence on the construction of the nature of place. This interest led me to explore an emerging body of literature within Critical Legal Studies, sometimes called Critical Legal Geography, which examines how law produces, defines and sustains the nature of places and the social relations between and within them.

I am currently delving into the work of academics researching at this geo-legal boundary, such as Nick Blomley at Simon Fraser University, Chris Butler at Griffith University and Alex Jeffrey at Cambridge. This is very fulfilling, as the opportunity to explore the interaction between academic disciplines that are so neatly (and in many respects artificially) separated in the Cambridge triposes is a rare one. Hopefully, it will additionally provide me with an alternative perspective on law, which may be of at least some tangential value during my upcoming legal studies.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The extremely diverse backgrounds of the participants on the Summer School – in terms of both nationality and academic background – was undeniably a hugely positive feature, making the debate and discussion between class members much more stimulating and thought-provoking. However, the idiosyncrasy of the British constitution, and particularly the peculiar nature of our uncodified constitution premised on a vexing notion of Parliamentary Sovereignty, made discussions of constitutional law at times challenging. The British students on the Summer School instinctively understood that, although in theory ‘anything that Parliament enacts is law’ and the courts lack the power to nullify primary legislation, long-standing constitutional conventions and a deep democratic culture mitigate against fundamental changes to the constitution by the legislature (such as the abolition of elections). This concept, that Parliament is legally but



not politically sovereign, could not easily be grasped by students from other nations. Thus discussions of unique British legal mechanisms seeking to reconcile a traditionally deferential judiciary with protection of human rights, such as the s.3(1) of the Human Rights Act 1998, tended to descend more into cultural incomprehension and outright rejection rather than reconciliation and understanding of opposing perspectives and legal traditions. This could sometimes be frustrating, exposing to my mind an innate bias by all participants (with the British students such as myself perhaps most prejudiced) towards favouring one’s own national legal tradition over that of others.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Arising out of my decision to switch tripos from Geography to Law in October 2012, the Summer School has been valuable in introducing me to the skills of legal reasoning and research, which will be required in my forthcoming studies: extracting pertinent facts and key principles from statutes and cases; arguing in a precise and logical manner; and taking a critical perspective on the law as it stands. It spurred my thinking about which areas of law I might like to take as optional papers in the final year of my degree, and generally helped the transition from one subject to another. I feel that I have a basic foundation in English law that will serve me well come October when faced with the intense workload of Part IB Law. More importantly, it fired up my enthusiasm to tackle the intellectual challenges of a Law degree, and will hopefully assist me in applications for work experience in the legal sector.



I'm extremely grateful to have benefited from College funding under an Undergraduate Academic Research Project grant. I would not otherwise have been able to undertake the Summer School due to financial constraints, so obviously the availability of such generous support has been integral in helping me prepare to switch into the Law Tripos, and hopefully thereby to continue my academic success for the remainder of my degree and beyond.

Examination of the friction on graphene surface under mechanical stress

by Bence Börcsök

Location: Institute of Technical Physics and Materials Science, Research Centre for Natural Sciences, Hungarian Academy, Budapest

Dates: 27 August–21 September 2012

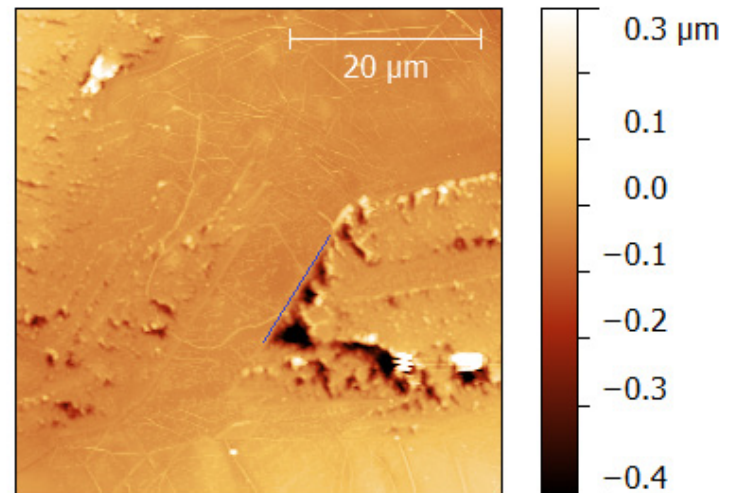
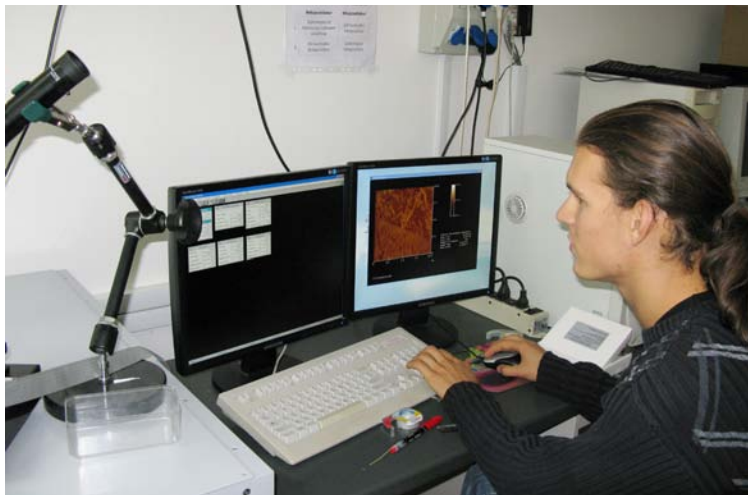
Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Due to the fast development in the area of graphene, my original project (The removal of

graphene from its supporting metal substrate by chemical process) became less useful to the institute so we decided to choose another project for me.

In this new project I examined the friction on the graphene surface during homogenous stress. This project involved the preparation of the samples and the measurements with the Atomic Force Microscope (AFM). I managed to familiarise myself with the exfoliation of graphene, production of substrates, different transfer methods, the use of AFM and data analysing processes.

The results I got during the project show consistence with the predictions and this indicates the usefulness of this project. However, due to the short period of the project it requires further measurements, which will be performed by my supervisor, to collect an adequate amount of data to publish an article.



What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I really enjoyed the atmosphere at the institute. It was very inspiring to meet working scientists, get involved in the work and see their everyday life. I enjoyed the challenge of negotiation of unseen problems and the pleasure when the trend of the data is consistent with the predictions.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Definitely the preparation of the sample was the most challenging part of my project. It took two weeks to make an appropriate sample for the measurement. Many problems occurred while we were making the supporting substrate: one material was too soft for the measurements, the other one was too brittle and broke under stress, the interaction was not strong enough in the composition, and so on. Fortunately we managed to find an appropriate material and I had enough time left to take the first series of measurements and analyse them.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This project gave me a good impression of how experimental physicists work in labs. It will be very helpful when I decide what I want to specialise in. I got great experience of data analysis and use of AFM, which is beneficial later on in the course and applying for another internship or a job.



Novelty seeking in Economics

by Sophie Dundovic

Location: Oxford University

Dates: July 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Over a two-week period in July I worked as part of a small team running behavioural experiments in Oxford. We ran the experiments at Nuffield College where the behavioural and experimental economics lab is based. The experiment was pen and paper, it involved participants filling in a personality questionnaire and making decisions based on available information. Following the experiment I have been heavily involved in collecting and analysing the data. Some interesting results have been found and we will be conducting further experiments.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I particularly enjoyed the quick turnaround between sessions, it was exciting being under pressure to prepare for the next session and collect all the data from the previous one in such a short period of time. It has been very rewarding to see the whole process come together too, from the initial ideas months ago, through to creating a plan for the experimental procedure. Now that we have the data it is very

interesting to observe some of the trends that we had predicted.

The team I am working with have been phenomenal in giving me so much responsibility and involvement. I have learnt a huge amount from this project and that has to be the best part about it.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The most challenging part was meeting the experimental budget and preparing for the funding application. This involved negotiations with suppliers and a few innovative ideas.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This project has taught me how to undertake academic research, from searching relevant papers, writing a literature review and preparing a funding application, right through to conducting a behavioural experiment. It has had a huge impact on my future plans and given me an insight into the area of study I wish to pursue at graduate level.

A low-order model for the fluid-dynamical sewing machine

by Thomas Eaves

Location: Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics, Cambridge

Dates: 28 June–31 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

When a viscous fluid, like honey, is dropped from some height onto a flat stationary surface, like toast, the thin thread of fluid coils around its contact point with the surface. This 'liquid rope coiling' effect has been studied extensively in recent years, having applications in industry and in nature, for example slow moving lava 'waterfalls', and is now reasonably well understood.

A few years ago, my project supervisor and a summer student he tutored at the time thought to extend this phenomenon by dropping a viscous liquid onto a moving surface, rather than a stationary one. When the surface is moved very quickly, the fluid is stretched into a long straight line, as might be expected. Also, when the surface is nearly stationary, the behaviour is very similar to the coiling rope motion of the stationary surface. It was expected that a reasonably simple and straightforward process would transform between the slow and fast moving

regimes, but instead 13 different patterns of meanders, figures of eight, side-kicks, along with period double versions were discovered. This wide range of patterned behaviour led to the name 'fluid-dynamical sewing machine'.

It is possible to formulate this problem mathematically, resulting in 21 equations. However, solving all these equations is impossible without a computer, and just to look at them reveals no insight into why the system should behave as it should. The purpose of my project was to search for a simplified set of equations, perhaps reducing the system to only three or four, that whilst are not expected to solve the problem exactly, should capture the most important features and reproduce as many of the transitional behaviours as possible.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I found it very rewarding to spend an extended period of time working on a single project. Often whilst studying for the tripos, a lot of time is spent learning a variety of different topics and moving on quickly from given problems and ideas. It was good to spend time focusing more closely on a single set of ideas and to understand them more fully whilst having the freedom to sit back and think about an idea in depth.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Understanding and extracting the most relevant information from the wide ranging literature that exists surrounding this phenomenon was particularly challenging. However, through performing such a literature search it is very rewarding to see an interesting and coherent picture emerge.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Many of the mathematical tools that I used throughout the project were first introduced to me last year, and so it helped cement them in my mind. I also had to learn many other techniques that will be covered next year in Part III, and so it was useful to see and use these ahead of time. Using techniques learnt in the tripos in an evolving project helped to provide added context to my studies.

This project has allowed me to experience research in an academic environment and helped to convince me that I wish to study for a PhD in the area of fluid dynamics in the future.

The subglacial drainage system structure of Storglaciären, Sweden

by Isabel Foster

Location: Storglaciären, Tarfala Valley, Northern Sweden

Dates: 11–27 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

This August I carried out my dissertation fieldwork on Storglaciären, a polythermal glacier in the very north of Sweden. It was on Storglaciären that the first ever glacier mass balance programme began (set up immediately after World War II). This has continued until the present day, making it the longest continuous study of its type in the world. Despite this obvious interest in the glacier's mass balance, important aspects of its hydrology have been ignored. Resultantly I thought this the ideal location to carry out my dissertation research.

I was part of an experienced research team using a variety of empirical techniques to infer the glacier's subglacial drainage system structure. Most importantly, I was involved in dye tracing experiments, which are a common method used in hydrological studies. These involved pouring a specific concentration of Rhodamine, a fluorescent dye, into various moulins across the glacier's





surface. We would then begin sampling of the three pro-glacial streams, taking a 25ml sample from each stream every 5–10 minutes. These samples were analysed in the laboratory every evening to show the concentration of the dye in each. This continuous monitoring of dye concentrations allows construction of dye return curves for each injection site. These provide a great deal of information about the character of the subglacial drainage system through which the tracer has passed; a great deal of information that I will be trying to decipher in the coming academic year!

[What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?](#)

To call the Tarfala Research Station where I stayed remote would definitely be an understatement, though I am sure that its location made for the most enjoyable moments of the trip. The scenery in the surrounding area was beautiful and I saw some fantastic views (on the sunny days) from high up on the glacier. A particular highlight was the helicopter ride on our way up to the Research Station on the first day – the experience was one that I am unlikely to forget.

[What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?](#)

On arrival at the research station, we were informed that the other two members of our team had been having trouble collecting results because the moulins had not ‘opened up’ yet. For a moulin to be usable in a dye tracing experiment it must

have sufficient quantities of water flowing into it and directly to the bed. Due to the colder temperatures experienced in the region all summer there had not been enough melt for this to happen, and therefore the moulins were largely unusable. This was a big concern as I thought that I would have to develop an entirely new dissertation plan in the space of a few days. Luckily, temperatures rapidly increased over the first few days of my stay causing nearly all of the moulins to open up and allowing our experiments to go ahead. Two days before I was scheduled to leave, the temperatures plummeted again causing the subglacial system to close up. This meant I was conveniently studying the glacier over the two week period that its subglacial system not only opened up but also closed again!

[How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?](#)

The analysis of the raw data collected in Sweden will allow me to infer the subglacial drainage system structure that was present at Storglaciären in late August. This insight will not only help me complete my Part II dissertation, but it has also given me valuable first-hand experience into the study of the cryosphere, which is central to a number of my Part IB and Part II papers. I also thoroughly enjoyed my time in Sweden and I am now much more confident in my own ability to take on challenges outside of my comfort zone. I hope to take what I have learned this summer and use it to make my final year of the trip a successful one.

The British and the Bund: Space and power in the International Settlement of 1920s Shanghai

by Laura Grossick

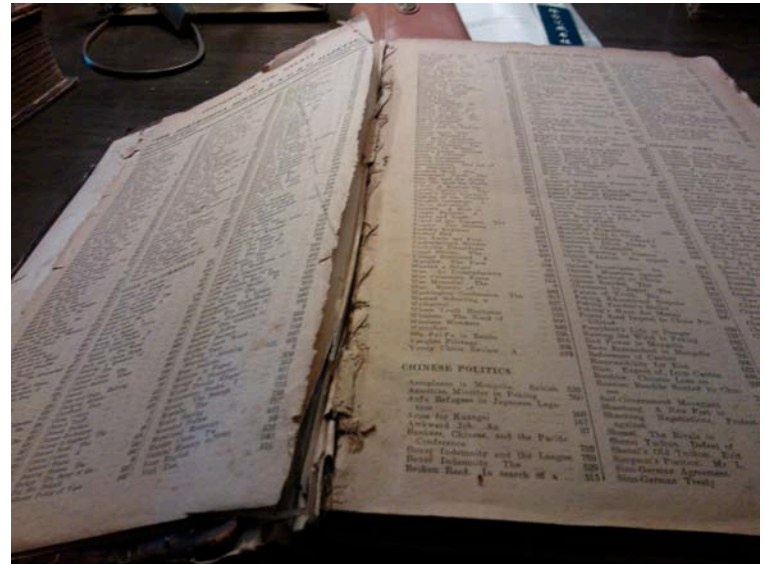
Location: London and Shanghai

Dates: July–August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

The main aim of my project was to find as many primary sources as possible, both in England and Shanghai, in order to help create a picture of how the British asserted their power and ideology in residential spaces (particularly buildings of the home in both their structure and layout) in the International Settlement of Shanghai, and in addition how this compared to the use of commercial space on the Bund throughout the same time period.

The first two weeks of my research were held in London, firstly at the HSBC archives where company records such as interviews, images and general house plans and books helped me to start visualising what life in Shanghai during the 1920s would have been like. It was of great use particularly for first-hand experiences of expatriate Shanghai and images of people's homes. The next week took me to RIBA, where I learnt more about colonial and semi-colonial



architecture, architecture of the home in general and gained access to primary sources such as photos and written records. Whilst in Shanghai I spent most of my time in the Shanghai Municipal Archives, a governmental institute, which held a wealth of information such as council minutes, pictures and lots of formal documentation on the International Settlement throughout the 1920s. Whilst all my documents were written in English, the Chinese cataloguing was a slight cause of panic, but with help from a bilingual researcher who was thankfully sat at the desk next to mine, looking up documents soon became second nature. The Zi Ka Wei Library, an old Jesuit church turned library, which held newspaper and magazine records dating back to the nineteenth century, also added to my factual collage of life in



Shanghai and added new and interesting angles to my research.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

Exploring the history of a country was made both more interesting and enjoyable thanks to the added bonus of being immersed in its scenery and culture. Spending such a long period of time in Shanghai helped me not only to learn a great deal about its multi-faceted history, but also a huge amount about its people, food and way of life. Archival work, whilst physically quite static, was a captivating new skill that I would otherwise have had little exposure to, but one which I have on the whole enjoyed. It was also a wonderful way to meet new and interesting people, carrying out research in all sorts of inspiring areas.



What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The language barrier proved to be quite difficult both in and out of research, but overcoming these challenges helps you to appreciate the similarities people have beyond culture and language, and pushes you to think of inventive ways of expressing yourself. Learning how each archive worked and methods for getting material was initially complex but all in all a good and challenging experience.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

The research I have carried out over the length of the summer has helped me with my final year dissertation and also in uncovering how the British used space and in what ways, in what was a complex and international area of Shanghai during the 1920s. It has taught me a number of new skills and has led me to meet a number of exciting and fascinating people, many of whom I owe a huge 'thank you' to for helping me in times of linguistic and geographical need.

Spousal violence in the home and the importance of education

by Rebecca Jevons

Location: Dhaka, Bangladesh

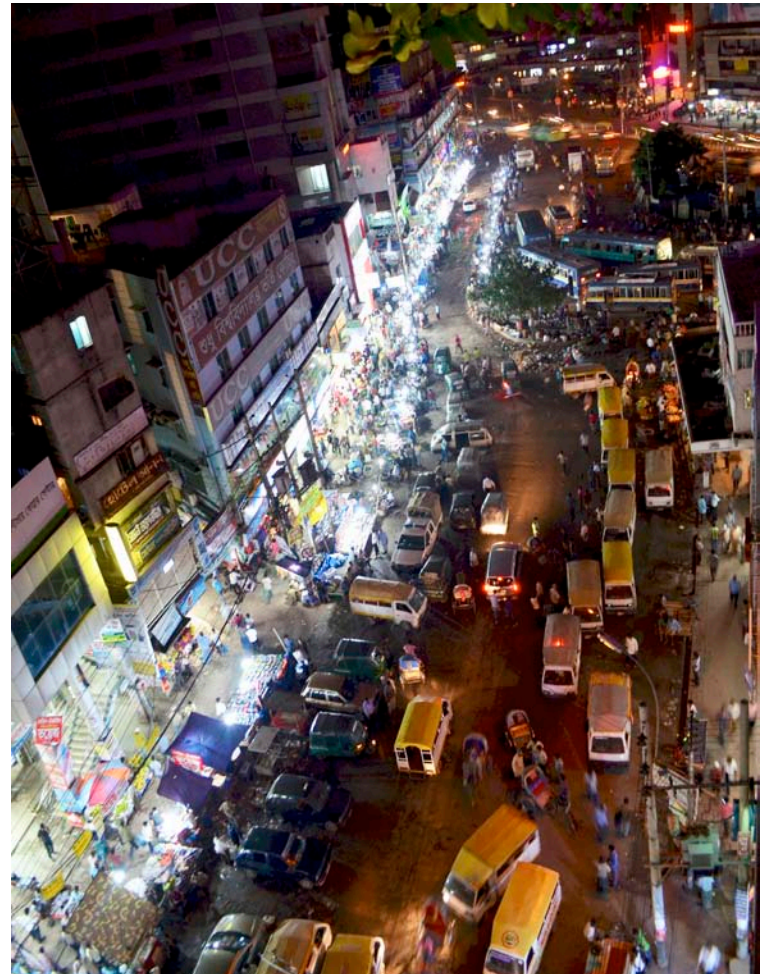
Dates: July–August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

I was involved in researching the potential impacts of educational qualifications on spousal violence in Bangladesh. Working with ICDDR, B, an international research institution, I was able to obtain information crucial to the success of the project. In addition to this research I was also able to travel beyond the capital of Dhaka and explore more of the country, visiting tea plantations and ancient Mughal forts.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I enjoyed interacting with a broad range of different people in Bangladesh. A lot of interest was shown in my project and I enjoyed discussing it with different people and getting their opinions on my work. The project allowed me to explore a subject of interest independently and away from the usual lecture-supervision structure found at university.



Travelling in Bangladesh was equally enjoyable. The lack of an established tourist industry in Bangladesh made travelling much more interesting and unpredictable. Half the challenge was getting to the destination.



What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Bangladesh has very high poverty rates and this was very evident the moment I walked out of the airport. Begging was constant and I would see people

struggling to live constantly. This was a harsh reality check and one that was impossible to come to terms with. This everyday experience was a challenge at times to deal with and one that I will not miss.



How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This project has enabled me to work independently on a project of interest that I would not otherwise have the opportunity to learn about

at university. It has allowed me to develop an array of skills, including the ability to organise a project timeline, as well as the ability to tackle problems in a positive and constructive way. The project will be critical for my studies and will contribute immensely to my final degree.

An investigation into the circadian regulation of antioxidant genes

by Zoe Li

Location: University of Manchester

Dates: 25 June–3 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

During the summer I spent my time assisting in a lab, investigating the potential circadian regulation of the promoter activities of the genes *wee1*, *nrf2* and *hmx1*. These genes are important in cell cycle regulation, protection against oxidative stress and haem catabolism. They thus have many implications in intracellular signalling pathways and in the pathogenesis of diseases. It has already been shown that there is circadian clock regulation of many intracellular pathways, including the antioxidant response pathway, and that *nrf2* and *wee1* have circadian promoter activity. The investigation aimed to test whether these promoter fragments can oscillate within the cells the lab was working with.

The investigation involved a range of molecular biology techniques that I assisted in, such as helping to subclone these genes from an existing vector into a plasmid with a luciferase reporter, which would allow

us to monitor the activity of these genes via real-time luciferase recording. This involved enzymatic digestion of DNA, DNA purification and ligation. We transformed *E. coli* cells and grew them in cell culture, and single colonies were then taken for mini-prep culture, and the plasmid DNA was sequenced and the results analysed.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I hugely enjoyed the opportunity to get involved in a working scientific environment, where I could observe and practice the different molecular biology techniques I had been learning about in my undergraduate course, as well as being able to see scientific principles and knowledge used directly in a research context. I also met and spoke to many different people during this lab project about their work and their careers in science, which was fascinating and inspiring.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

From my project I really began to appreciate the level of dedication and the amount of work needed behind basic science research, especially when only negative results are produced, which can feel frustrating at times. A challenging aspect is maintaining focus and direction even when things aren't working so well, and having enough confidence to persevere with the work.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This project made me realise how much I enjoy working in a lab environment, and reassured me in my decision to select a Part II Pathology course this year with a lab project element. The opportunity to familiarise myself with basic molecular biology techniques over the summer has been invaluable in my Part II lab work, and has also lead to a greater understanding of experimental techniques when reading scientific literature.

As a medical student, I felt that this was a brilliant opportunity for me to gain a greater insight into basic science research and the opportunities and experiences this could offer, and how this is something I may want to consider as part of my future career.



A sincere thank you to Dr Meng and his lab for having me over the summer, and St John's College for the funding that enabled me to undertake this project.

How do differences in motility of *Salmonella enterica* serovar *Typhimurium* strains affect intracellular uptake into macrophages?

by Charlotte Macleod

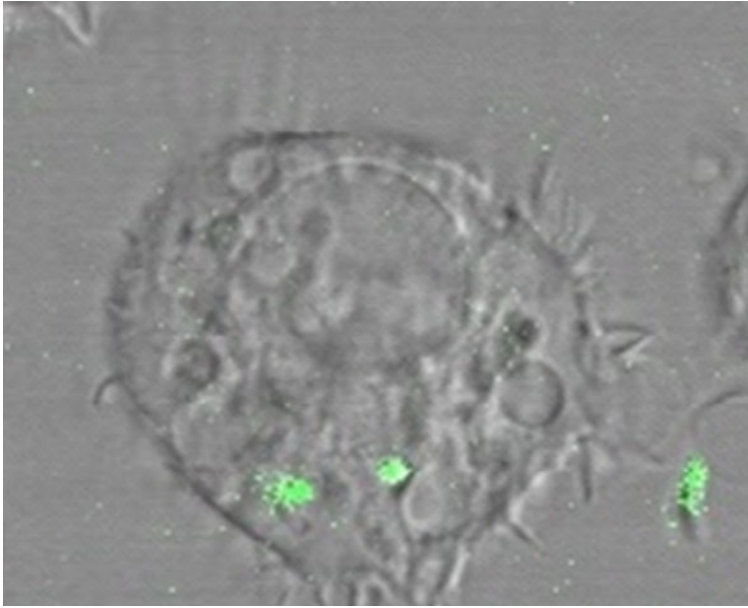
Location: Cambridge Veterinary School

Dates: 2 July–24 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Macrophages established from a tumour induced by Abelson murine leukaemia virus were infected with *Salmonella enterica* serovar *Typhimurium* with different motile properties to determine whether differences in motility affected intracellular uptake into macrophages. I was involved in many aspects of this project from creating the mutant strains of *Salmonella* to performing gentamicin protection assays, which provided data on bacterial uptake into macrophages. I was also involved in the analysis of microscopy films.





A macrophage infected with fluorescently labelled *S. Typhimurium*

Time management was the most challenging aspect of the project. I found it challenging working out how to slot different experiments together with their different timings, such as incubation periods, in a way so as to maximise what could be achieved in a day.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

This project has opened my eyes to the world of research and because of the experience I am now applying for PhDs within the field of pathology.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I thoroughly enjoyed everything about the research project, but in particular the challenges involved with all of the different experimental techniques; thinking about why these techniques were being used and what was actually happening. I also found it exciting to analyse and interpret the data acquired from experiments that I had conducted.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Internship at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland/Persian language course

by Aleksander Makal

Location: Tehran, Iran

Dates: 1 July–18 September 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

During my stay in Tehran I was involved in two main activities: I was an intern at the Polish Embassy and I attended a Persian language course at the International Centre for Persian Studies.

In the embassy, except for being introduced to the various aspects of diplomacy in theory and practice, I served as a Persian-to-Polish translator in consular interviews and was involved in a joint project of several European embassies which aimed at a comprehensive survey of graves on the local Catholic cemetery, currently in danger of being bulldozed by the local municipality. Working together with several interns from other embassies, I had to photograph all the gravestones, produce a comprehensive list of the deceased, including all the details that could be obtained from the stones or otherwise. As a result a database containing information about all graves was produced which, subsequently, was made available

to the wider, international public via a website (www.doulabcemetery.com).

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

Working in an international team towards the laudable aim of preserving the memory and history of those who departed this life thousands of miles from their homes, whether as a result of wars, marriages, travels or foreign missions was, without a doubt, a highly rewarding experience. I also had a chance to get to know the history of almost 120,000 of my fellow citizens who, at the darkest hour of the Second World War, were transferred from the forced labour camps of the USSR to Iran and thus found refuge in a country that achieved particular notoriety in the Western media.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Iran has a distinct culture that most Iranians are aware and proud of. I found it difficult at times to understand some of its aspects and accept those that went against my own values. Being in need of reminding myself frequently of things like dress code and a particular code of public behaviour was an additional challenge.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

For a student of Persian any opportunity of entering Iran, given the current political situation,

is not to be missed. The internship offered to me exactly this and both the various embassy jobs and the afternoon Persian course helped me improve my Persian greatly. I was able to confront my bookish knowledge of Iran and its language with real people with all their beliefs and opinions.

Cambridge iGEM 2012

by Jolyon Martin

Location: Cambridge

Dates: July–October 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

iGEM is the international genetically engineered machine competition. Undergraduate teams from around the world compete to design and implement the best new system based on standard DNA parts. Teams try to tackle a wide range of problems, from pollution to medicine to deforestation, or alternatively explore what is possible, by creating biological computing devices. Over the previous five years since the competition began, many biosensors have been developed, each with their own application. However, the outputs are not standardised, and furthermore, they require expensive laboratory equipment to interpret the results. The 2012 iGEM team from Cambridge has worked on developing a standardised output that can be recorded by a simple device, which we have also made, and interpreted by easy to use software, another part of our project. We have also developed a new sensor for fluoride poisoning of groundwater. The idea behind our project is that our kit will be able to be used by NGO workers with limited resources and minimal training, in order to reliably and quantitatively survey the levels of contamination in their area.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

The total freedom. It is unheard of in science, outside of opportunities like iGEM, for second year undergraduates to have access to a lab, advisors and funding, and for them to simply be told to work on whatever most appeals to them, out of anything they can think of, for three months. It meant we could really take ownership of what we were doing, and it made all the hard work seem that much easier, as we were working for ourselves, not merely doing what we were told.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The lack of direction. Whilst the freedom was wonderful, it did pose some problems. We planned and carried out all of the experiments, and whilst we did have advisors to ask, we often didn't realise when we needed to. There were cases when an entire week's work was wasted because we assumed that a reagent had to be dissolved in water, whereas actually it had to be dissolved in something else and was totally inactive in water. It was the little things like this that really showed our lack of experience and it did slow down the process. We learnt a lot of new techniques which was great, but the time spent learning them detracted from the time we could spend using them.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

I am very glad I undertook this project, I have gained a lot of valuable experience in cutting edge synthetic biology and learnt a lot about this field. But where I think I have gained the most is that I now have a much more realistic idea of what pursuing academic science will entail. Prior to the project I just wanted to be an academic without having really considered what it would entail, but now I have a greater appreciation of how far removed the carefully planned practicals we take part in are from real research. There is more to think about, there are more failures, it is more difficult, but it is also more rewarding. I still want to do a PhD, this wish has been cemented, but I definitely wish to keep my career options open and so perhaps it would be better for me to follow a different path next summer and apply for internships away from science in order to make an informed decision about a potential future in scientific research.

Neuroscience research project

by Khomgrit Morarach

Location: Department of Zoology, University of Cambridge

Dates: 26 July–20 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

Neurons are building blocks of neural circuits. One way to understand the computation of neural circuits is to manipulate the activity of individual neurons in the circuits and observe behavioural changes. It was not until recently that molecular genetics tools have become powerful enough to allow a small subset of neurons to be labelled by fluorescent proteins and genetically engineered in such a way that their activity is induced or repressed. To do this we need to express photo- or heat- sensitive ion channels in labelled neurons so that their activity is altered when we introduce light or heat. However the challenge remains that the population of labelled cells is still too large and sometimes not specific enough to a single cell type. To tackle this challenge Luan et al (2006) have developed a technique called split-Gal4. This is what we set out to do in this project.

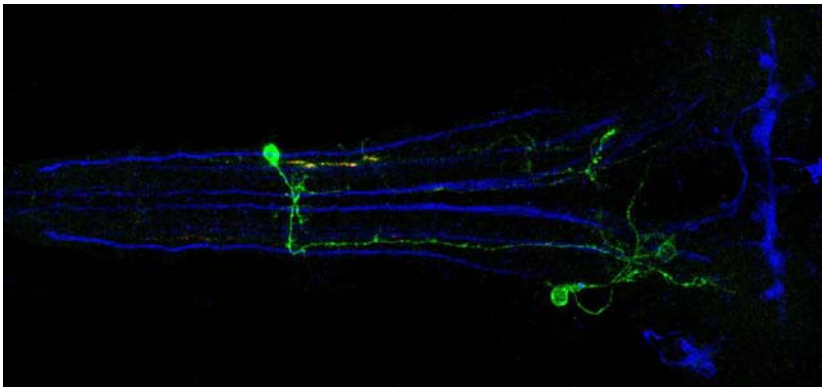
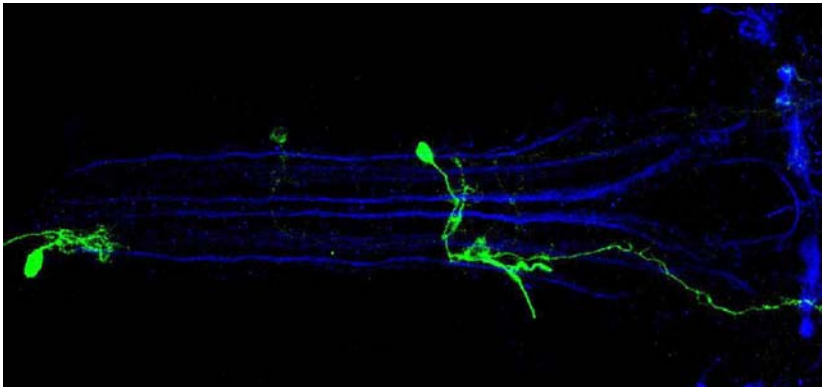
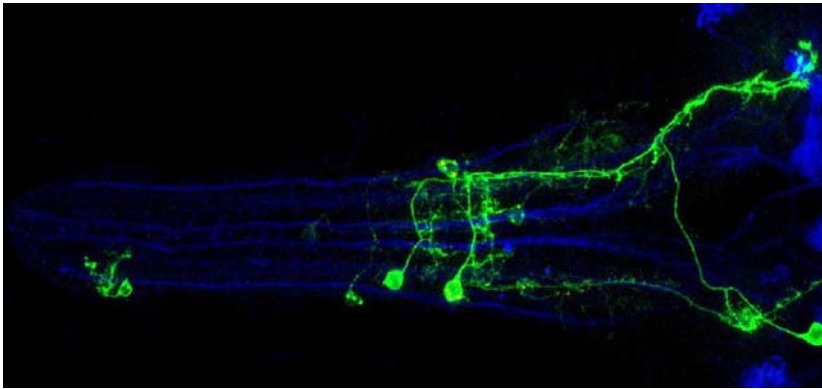
Gal4 is a yeast transcription factor that can also work in flies. Dr Landgraf's lab is interested in spinal cord neurons in first-instar larvae because neural circuits for locomotion start to operate at this stage.

We crossed a pair of genetically engineered flies to create progeny with a genetic system where half of the Gal4 is expressed in cholinergic neurons, and the other half is a random group of cells. Thus intact Gal4 is only present in cells that express both halves of the Gal4, which in our experiment is a very small subset of cholinergic neurons. We dissected out the central nervous system from the larvae, which contains the brain and spinal cord of the first instar larvae. We then stained with the antibodies attached to fluorescent proteins and visualised in confocal microscope to see the pattern of expression.

We managed to label a number of interneurons that might be essential for locomotion circuits of the fly larvae. In addition, some labelled neurons showed an interesting morphology that might be useful in developmental studies. However, this technique has some limitations. One is that when two or more labelled neurons overlap, it is impossible to be certain about their connections. Further studies, such as split-Green Fluorescent Protein (GFP) assay, may be performed to identify protein-protein interaction at synapses.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

Apart from the first-hand experience in the cutting-edge experimental techniques, working at the Department of Zoology gave me the unique opportunity to participate in scientific discussions either in a rather formal lab meeting or in casual conversations. What I have learnt is that nothing can



stop scientists talking science. Every morning and afternoon people from different labs will gather for a tea break and discuss their work or recent scientific discoveries. This has helped me to expand my interest in neuroscience.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

This project has allowed me to learn not only how science works but also how it sometimes does not work. It took us two weeks to realise that the standard protocol was not working for some genetic lines. The confocal imaging showed unusually high noise signal. We suspected that it was due to either the antibody used not being specific enough or the concentration of antibody being too high. Thus we designed a series of experiments to test our hypothesis. It turned out that the latter was correct. Therefore we augmented the protocol by reducing concentrations of antibody to optimal level.

Left: Three examples of confocal images. They show different subsets of neurons labelled by the green fluorescent protein (GFP). The neurons from the spinal cord project up to the brain. The neural tracts along the spinal cord and in the brain are labelled by fluorescent molecules attached to antibodies, which appears blue in the pictures. The neural tracts provide the reference positions to the labelled neurons.

When an experiment does not go as we expect, it might be because there is something going on that has not yet been discovered. We have learnt from the history of science that sometimes this can potentially lead to another scientific breakthrough. However, a much greater number of failed experiments, especially unpublished ones, might just be a consequence of technical errors. Learning how to deal comfortably with failed experiments is to my view equally important; it seems to be a second nature of professional scientists.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

In terms of studies, since my project is relevant to my Part II course (neuroscience) I have acquired a great depth of knowledge on the subject that I would never have had if I were to sit in the lecture or do some reading alone. It is the ability to critically evaluate experimental designs that I have begun to appreciate.

In term of personal development, during the experiments I had to be very organised. The experiments have to be precisely and carefully done. One set of experiments took about two weeks. However, as we wanted to maximise our work efficiency we decided to run two sets of experiments in slightly overlapping time frames. The protocol had to be adjusted to fit not only our timetable but also to the fly life cycle!



Above: Fly stocks. Each vial contains one genetic line

Natural convection in melting icicles

by Simon Schulz

Location: Department of Applied Mathematics & Theoretical Physics (DAMTP), Cambridge

Dates: 27 June–24 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

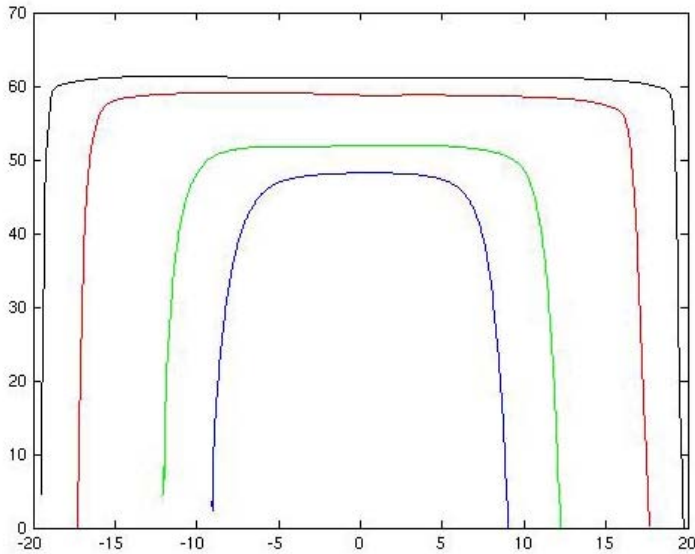
The project that I was involved in was concerned with establishing a suitable model for predicting the shape evolution of melting icicles with arbitrary initial shape. The project comprised an experimental and a theoretical part. The experimental method involved the use of Schlieren photography to resolve the convective boundary layers that exist near the surface of an icicle, and to capture images of the icicle shape over time. We developed the theoretical formulation of the problem using elements of boundary layer theory and heat transfer. The aim was (and still is, since the problem was not entirely solved) to assess the validity of our theoretical model by direct comparison with the results of the experiment.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?



Above: Schlieren photography

I most enjoyed understanding the theory behind the problem and reading some of the scientific papers that had been published on the subject. Most of the material was new to me, since boundary layers and convection are covered in third year, and so I found it very rewarding to invest some time introducing myself to these areas of physics.



Above: Graph showing evolution of shape over time

Getting to work with high-tech equipment such as the Schlieren set-up was also very fun. The principles behind its operation are so simple, yet it's very difficult to get it to work exactly right. And you get pretty pictures of the flow patterns around the icicle, which (in addition to being aesthetically pleasing) are physically very enlightening.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

I found the experimental aspect of the project most challenging. I don't always have the magical 'experimental touch' and so often don't enjoy practicals. As noted in the previous section, setting

up the Schlieren was a difficult process, which is only done by trial and error.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Relating to the previous section, I thought that it was good for my personal development to have carried out experimental work. I naturally tend toward the theoretical aspects of problems, and I will keep doing so in the future, so I doubt that I would push to do experimental work in the future. However, as already noted, it is a necessary thing in any scientist's arsenal to have a good appreciation of experimental techniques, so this experience was very valuable in that sense.

In terms of the theory, learning about numerical methods, boundary layers, heat transfer and various other tools/topics in mathematical modelling and fluid mechanics has been extremely valuable. It will help me to grasp ideas more easily in those fields when I study them further in the years to come, and also if I decide to do research in those areas.

DoITPoMS computing project

by Daniel Scott

Location: Cambridge

Dates: 2 July–24 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

In consultation with Dr Zoe Barber of the device materials group, I created an interactive teaching and learning computer package entitled 'Physical Vapour Deposition'.

This package is part of a worldwide initiative to encourage learning in materials science called DoITPoMS. This involves the use of interactive web pages, lecture demonstrations, and micrographs.

My role mainly involved deciding on the content of the package, writing this content, and constructing the animations and simulations featured. The simulations were made using Adobe Flash.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I enjoyed working as part of a team with other students on the program. The way in which we all had separate work but each contributed ideas and help to each other was fulfilling. This was particularly exciting as half of the students involved were visiting

from Moscow State University. This provided an insight into the workings and culture of another nation.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

As I had no experience of using Adobe Flash before the project it was challenging to learn this package on-the-job. This was made a lot easier by the help provided, such as the professional programmer available when I got stuck!

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Learning a new computing program has certainly been a useful skill. It provides a solid grounding that I can build on when learning other packages in the future.

It was also different to work with professors and lecturers within the Department to observe their side of the University.

A simulation of 3-phase full-bridge converter applied to a switched reluctance motor

by Jirawat Tangpanitanon

Location: Thailand

Dates: August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

A switched reluctance motor is a type of high speed motor. It usually comes with a voltage converter called a half-bridge converter. However, using another type of converter called a 3-phase full-bridge converter can significantly lower the cost of production, but its energy efficiency will be lower. In the project, I studied how to maximise the efficiency of the motor by using simulation. The result suggests this can be done by modifying the switching sequence in the converter. My simulation matches well with the result obtained in the lab.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

I was free to write any kind of simulation as long as it did the job. The framework was also adjustable. It is always good when you have no boundaries in your work.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Simulating a whole system is a real challenge, because equations involve feedback, an electric circuit and rotation of the motor. Furthermore, all equations on the electric circuit change with time depending on the angular position of the motor.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

Writing a real simulation program is the basic skill of physicists. Having this internship definitely helped me familiarise myself with a MatLab program.

Mechanisms of neuropathogenesis of HIV

by Jasmine Wall

Location: Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, India

Dates: 18 June–10 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

During the long vacation I was engaged for eight weeks as a guest worker at the research laboratory of Dr Sunit Singh at the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) in Hyderabad, India. I was involved in research into HIV-1C virus, a subtype of HIV that is responsible for over half of HIV infections worldwide (mainly in Asia and Southern Africa) but which is not extensively researched in the UK.

During this research, I was familiarised with the general equipment and methods used in the analysis of protein and RNA, and the microbiological methods involved in working with viruses. I conducted original research on RNA expression in Brain Microvascular Endothelial Cells, working under close guidance and supervision.

The laboratory in which I worked focuses on the ‘bystander effect’ in Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV) and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV),

which are both endemic diseases in parts of India and South East Asia. The ‘bystander effect’ refers to the ability of HIV virus to cause cell death even in uninfected cells. In particular, my work investigated the mechanisms of HIV tat protein in causing HIV-associated Neurocognitive Degeneration (HAND). Approximately 30% of people infected with HIV will experience neurocognitive impairments at some point during their lives.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

One of the most enjoyable aspects of working abroad has been learning how to work and settle in a completely different culture. Research techniques are similar across the world, and working with RNA followed a similar protocol to one I would have learnt in Cambridge. However, the culture of CCMB is very different to one I would have encountered in Cambridge. Junior researchers live on site, as do senior researchers. As a result, the research lab is a social hub as well as an academic hub, with families, birthday parties and a community. One of the most gratifying aspects of working at CCMB has been becoming completely integrated into that community for a short while.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

Nothing could have prepared me for the culture shock of working in India for eight weeks. Learning

a foreign language, riding rickshaws through the monsoon to work, power cuts and food poisoning...

...working in India has given me a newfound respect for the everyday difficulties of working internationally, and especially for working in a foreign language.

[How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?](#)

As a medical student, lab-based research will form the basis for many of the medical interventions that I will encounter throughout my working life. As a doctor, I will also be conducting medical research, which will often draw from work similar to the research I conducted this summer. It is therefore valuable to understand the usefulness and limitations of such research. Working on such a summer project, I learnt much more about the nature of medical research than I could have otherwise, which places me in a better position to critically assess such research in the future.

Working in India also gave me an appreciation of global health – that diseases in one part of the world can deeply affect the health of populations on the other side of the globe. Although tropical diseases are common in India, they are increasingly seen in the UK as people travel more widely and more often. Research that began in India on West Nile Virus and Japanese Encephalitis Virus is now being used by laboratories in Switzerland, Finland and the UK.

Medical research is increasingly becoming a matter of international collaboration.



Thank you to the people who made this summer possible. I am grateful to have such an opportunity and I hope that it will allow me in turn to make a difference to the people I meet through my own career.

Computing in DNA

by Felix Yuran Zhou

Location: Winfree Lab, California Institute of Technology
Dates: 25 June–31 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

This summer I had the opportunity to engage in cutting-edge research being conducted at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) in a field called algorithmic self-assembly in the very lab that gave birth to the idea! This was in conjunction with the Cambridge-Caltech Exchange programme where each year Caltech students come to the UK to experience the ups and downs of the Cambridge tripos whilst in turn Cambridge students in the Sciences, Engineering and Mathematics disciplines are afforded the opportunity to experience the American academic system through engaging in research with Caltech faculty members through participation in their well-established undergraduate research scheme, the SURF program.

So what is algorithmic self-assembly? In essence algorithmic self-assembly is a research area that aims to construct complex patterns and shapes with DNA from using only a small set of simple building blocks. One of the best illustrations of this idea is probably snowflake patterns. Using only simple water molecules, mother nature rather miraculously



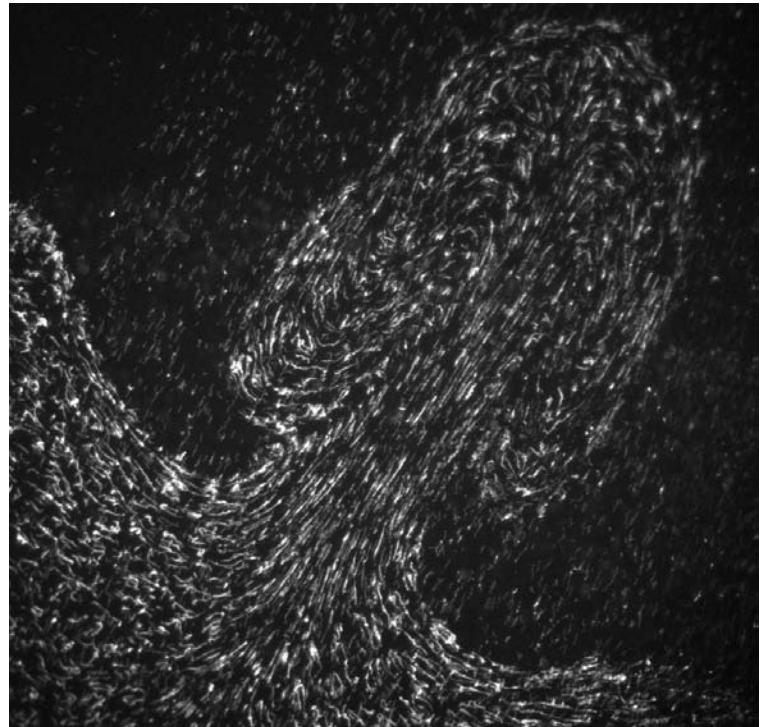
Above: The Beckman Institute and Caltech

is able to produce a myriad of snowflake patterns. Indeed, I believe there is a saying that claims no two snowflakes in nature are alike!

In DNA this paradigm is implemented through the DNA equivalent of squares. Why squares you ask? The simple answer is well, because they are nice. Conceptually squares are attractive; they are the simplest two-dimensional shape that regularly tile the 2D plane without rotation due to their lovely ninety-degree interior angles. Utilising the basic square shape and assigning various geometries to its edges, theoretically any arbitrary shape can be created/coded for, just like how the different edges of a jigsaw piece specifies its local position relative to its neighbours in a completed jigsaw puzzle. In order to implement these abstract concepts in DNA we have to use the DNA equivalent of the square, of which there are several varieties. What I worked on this summer was investigating the potential of one particular DNA equivalent recently discovered called the single-stranded tile (SST), which researchers believe may hold the key to realising large-scale algorithmic self-assembly.

[What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?](#)

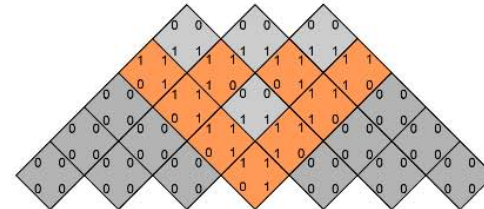
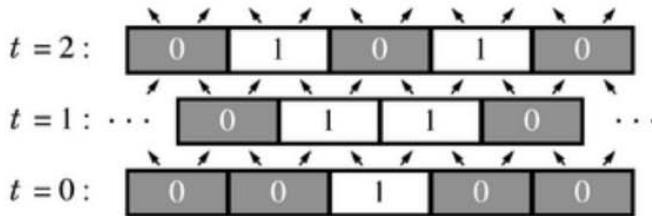
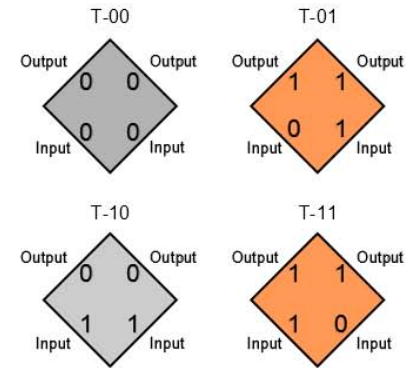
For me, this project was exciting in several ways; it was my first time working in a foreign laboratory outside the UK and the project itself was very original; no one else has tried to carry out algorithmic self-assembly with SSTs and there is very little literature on SSTs in general. Additionally, the task was challenging



Above: DNA nanotubes on a glass slide

from a technical point of view, I had to assemble 32-helix DNA nanotubes using SSTs, the largest ever, the largest prior demonstrated being a 20-helix. This was difficult because with increasing helix size, there follows a subsequent increase also in the kinetic barrier for self-assembly and subsequently larger helix nanotubes are harder to assemble with greater sensitivity to factors such as DNA concentration and temperature. On top of this we were also trialling the formation of nanotubes with unpure DNA, yet another first in the field in order to realise cost-efficiency.

Corresponding Tile	Input		Output
T-00	0	0	0
T-01	0	1	1
T-10	1	0	1
T-11	1	1	0



GROWTH

Above: Implementing XOR with algorithmic self-assembly

However, it was precisely because of these obstacles that I ended up having more fun than any other research project I have tackled thus far. Combined with working in a very dynamic and stimulating laboratory environment where PhD and post-docs alike bounced ideas off each other regardless of 'wackiness' and research background, with only pure regard for doing 'good science', I left Caltech with the confidence, resolve, creativity, drive and daring to conduct cutting-edge research independently.

[What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?](#)

The most challenging aspect of this project for me was undoubtedly data interpretation. I have heard it said that a successful experimenter is one who can interpret data, but what no one mentions is that there are two prerequisites in order for one to be able to interpret data meaningfully. Firstly your data has to be reliable; if you can't believe in your data due to unreliable methodology, cheap equipment etc, then any interpretation will be invalidated. Secondly, one

should read the literature diligently with both breadth and depth in order to efficiently infer information from experimental data for planning the next avenue of enquiry or identifying the pitfalls in the current experimental setup and implementation. The first comes only from meticulousness in experiments with fine attention to detail, and for someone who enjoys 'big pictures' this was quite a challenge. The second made me more aware of my need to read more widely and to gain understanding of a piece of apparatus or technique instead of simply following established protocols. This was a good thing; by being aware of one's shortcomings one gains the ability to evolve and by the end of the project I felt I was able to start overcoming my shortcomings and to make significant progress on my project – learning experiences that I will surely find invaluable in my future research career.

[How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?](#)

This project has assisted me immensely, particularly in terms of my personal development and academic career, and thanks to the wide diversity of specialisms within the laboratory group. I was made aware of the development of a rich, diverse range of technologies in molecular nanotechnology, which I was previously not aware of, such as in-vitro transcriptional circuits, artificial transcription-translation systems, strand-displacement logic and RNA programming, to mention but a few. Further, by talking to the people working in these fields I was able to gain a much clearer view of the current

research progress and trends in these fields, which I found has shaped greatly my research outlook. Above all, my experience at Caltech has spurred me on to actively pursue and engage in my research interests, to keep up to date with recent developments in my fields of interest and to dare to challenge the limits of what can be achieved. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at Caltech and would highly encourage fellow undergraduates to apply to the Caltech Exchange Programme.

Geometric Langlands Summer School

by Rong Zhou

Location: Freiburg, Germany

Dates: 29 July–3 August 2012

Briefly describe the activities of the project in which you were involved.

The aim of the summer school was to give an introduction into the Geometric Langlands Program, which is a very active area of research in the field of geometric representation theory. The summer school consisted of two 1.5 hour lectures per day together with problem sessions in the afternoon. The lectures were given by Tony Pantev and David Nadler, two experts in this field. Tony's lectures gave a more general overview of the program, which aims to find a correspondence between local systems on an algebraic curve and so-called 'Hecke Eigensheaves' over the moduli stack of vector bundles of the curve. David's lectures were an introduction to certain objects called 'Hecke Operators', which play a fundamental role in the theory.

What were some of the things you enjoyed most about working on the project?

One of the best things about the summer school was the opportunity it gave me to interact with other mathematicians who were far more advanced in their

careers, and to be able to get some of their insights into the subject. The people attending the conference ranged from PhD students to full professors, so it was fantastic to have people around to ask questions to whenever there was anything I didn't understand. The content of the lectures themselves was very stimulating, and the problem sets were quite interesting which all made for a very enjoyable learning experience.

What aspects of your travel project did you find most challenging?

The material covered in the summer schools was very advanced, and so following the lectures sometimes proved a challenge, especially as my background is in number theory. The Geometric Langlands Program was actually motivated by the original Langlands conjectures in number theory, but the subjects have very different flavours. However, with so many people around to answer my questions I eventually made sense of a lot of things that had baffled me.

How has this project assisted your studies and personal development?

I attended this conference with the aim of getting a flavour of what the Geometric Langlands Program was all about. I certainly feel like I have done this, as well as learning many new things, such as the theory of algebraic stacks, which should be useful in my own area of research in number theory. I feel I have gained some insight into a related area of mathematics, however I am quite glad to be able to get back to doing number theory again.



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