

THE LEVERHULME TRUST PHILIP LEVERHULME PRIZE NEWSLETTER – 2004

In this inaugural Prize Newsletter we are pleased to announce the award of 22 Philip Leverhulme Prizes. We also review the character of the Prize itself and give three examples of the use made of the Prize by previous and present winners.

Since their inception in 2001, the Philip Leverhulme Prizes have, through their provision of financial support and their degree of flexibility, won a respected place within the academic community.

The Philip Leverhulme Prizes commemorate the contribution to the work of the Trust made by Philip Leverhulme, the Third Viscount Leverhulme and grandson of the Trust's founder. Since 2001, the Trustees have awarded 106 of these Prizes totalling £5.3 million of funding to support and recognise research in subjects as diverse as Classics and Engineering. Each year approximately 25 awards are given in five selected subject areas. Including the round just awarded, prizes have been granted in thirteen different disciplines across the sciences, social sciences and humanities.

The key aim of the awards is to recognise and facilitate the work of outstanding young researchers (usually under the age of 36) based in UK universities. Prize recipients are scholars who have already influenced the understanding of their field and gained an international standing but of whom it is felt that their best research may well be yet to come. Prize winners each receive £50 000 over two years to pursue research in the way they judge to be most effective with little or no constraint imposed by the Trust. It is this flexibility of the award which has proved to be so attractive to the academic community. The recipients can follow their own intellectual path and can develop their research on an ongoing basis depending on concepts and results as these emerge. This is summed up by a 2001 prize winner Dr Tim Elliot, "The money has enabled me to develop projects in fields I have long hoped to explore as well as to move ahead with existing ones. The prize brings both finance and prestige with no associated administration burden. This is a perfect combination."

For the 2005 competition the Trustees have selected the following subject areas for the award of Prizes: Astronomy & Astrophysics; Engineering; Geography; Modern European Languages & Literature; and Philosophy & Ethics. Full application details can be downloaded from our website after 1 January 2005.

Past and present Leverhulme Prize winners

A 2001 Prize winner reports on the research he was able to do with the help of the Prize. This is followed by reports from two of this year's recipients who review their current research and suggest the changes that will occur now that they have won a Prize.

2001 Prize winner for Earth Sciences Dr Ralf Toumi – Imperial College London

The Himalayas and the Tibetan Plateau are one of the most fascinating regions of the world. This mountain complex has a profound impact on the Asian summer monsoon and affects the global climate. It has been estimated that it is the source region of rivers supporting nearly half the world's population. Despite its importance this region has been little studied in terms of meteorological observations, with only a handful of regularly reporting meteorological stations. Upper air data in particular are largely unavailable or unreliable. It is this lack of data that has motivated the establishment of sites in the High Himalayas. There

Two sherpas on the South Col of Mount Everest.



are obvious logistical difficulties in making measurements, but there are also substantial political obstacles with seemingly never ending conflicts across the region.

The Prize made it possible to support expeditions to three mountains in the Eastern Himalaya: Mt. Everest, Cho Oyu and Shishapangma. Barometers were placed on each mountain at ~8000 m. The instruments were purpose built at Imperial College primarily to measure pressure every minute, but they also contain humidity and temperature sensors. The battery powered instruments are left with a data logger until the next expedition in the following year can collect them. Real-time data links require excessive power consumption. So far, one year of data from the South Col of Mt Everest has been recovered. This is the highest continuous record of surface pressure in the world. Thanks to the Philip Leverhulme Prize strong collaborative links with the Nepal Met Office and

Chinese researchers in Tibet have been made. We are using the Everest data in conjunction with valley data to investigate the diurnal variation of weather in the region. The data are consistent with maximum night-time convection which is very unusual over land. This will be highly relevant to climate change predictions. It is known that one of the largest deficiencies of the climate models is their inability to model correctly the diurnal timing of convection. To improve our confidence in the model predictions of global warming, we need to improve our understanding and parameterization of convection in these models. This data set will help to achieve this objective.

The Prize has given me exceptional freedom and opportunities. It has allowed creativity to flow which is sometimes constrained by directed grants. I strongly believe that non-linear research breakthroughs are more likely to come through this enlightened approach than through routine funding routes.

2004 Prize winner – Medieval, Early Modern and Modern History

Dr Steven Lovell, Department of History,
King's College London

Russian history – social, cultural and intellectual – is where my research interests lie. My first project was a history of reading and publishing in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. In 1991, as a student visitor to the Soviet Union, I noticed how the Russians liked to imagine themselves the ‘best-read people in the world’. As I traced this attitude back in time, I found that it had its roots in the relationship between politics and culture in the revolutionary state. In early Soviet Russia a mass reading public emerged extremely rapidly and became an object of great fascination for a ruling elite with society-transforming ambitions. By early 1930s a ‘Russian reading myth’ had taken shape: the publicly expressed conviction that the Soviet reading public was uniquely active, united and homogeneous. In my research I offered an account of how the reading myth took hold in the early Soviet period, how it was supported by a monopolistic system of book production and distribution, and how it was eventually challenged in the post-Stalin and post-Soviet eras.

After completing my first book (*The Russian Reading Revolution*, 2000) I turned my attention to the history of Russian society in its more everyday aspects. My second book (*Summerfolk*, 2003) is the first full history of the Russian dacha (country or weekend

house). It traces the dacha phenomenon from its early eighteenth-century origins in the settlement outside St Petersburg to its latest manifestation in the suburban sprawl of post-Soviet Russia.

I am both honoured and excited to have received a Philip Leverhulme Prize. The award will above all give me time to devote myself to new projects. The first of these is a book in Zed Book's new series ‘A Global History of the Present’ on the history of Russia since 1989. The fall of communism is the defining political event of my generation (analogous in magnitude, though thankfully not in body-count, to 1917), yet it



A Russian Dacha

has now imperceptibly begun to retreat into the historical middle-distance. My main activity, however, will be to research a history of the generations in Russia. At its broadest, this project can be regarded as an attempt to answer the question: how has age

mattered in modern Russia? Unlike the other key markers of modern identity, such as, class, gender and ethnicity, age related identities and allegiances have not figured large in broader treatments of Russian History. My aim is to make good this omission.

2004 Prize Winner – Anthropology
Dr Mark Harris, Department of Social Anthropology, University of St Andrews

I am very pleased that my research has received a Philip Leverhulme Prize because it recognises the significance of subjects often marginalised. For 12 years I have been writing about Brazilian Amazonian peasants and traders who live along the riverways and on the floodplains of the region. They are of mixed ancestry (mestiços), have various origins and have no separate ethnic identity. My project is to articulate these diverse histories and cultures both for a Brazilian and an academic audience. The central challenge here is to understand the new kinds of people who emerged following the Iberian conquest, and the diverse combinations of cultures and personalities in different periods and places. Neither Amerindian nor European, mestiços moved between worlds and acted out complicated and ambiguous roles. How did they reinvent Old World practices and beliefs in these new cosmopolitan societies? Such matters are both historical and anthropological, and I believe deeply humanistic – a perspective which appears to be unfashionable in current academic thinking.

So far my work has been mainly based in the 20th and the present century arising from my fieldwork in the state of Pará, Brazil and has been concerned with theoretical questions of identity and knowledge. I have now moved to the archive and other historical sources to pursue my interests in Portuguese, i.e. colonial, America. At the moment, I am writing on the origins of a massive mestiço rebellion which convulsed the Amazon in the late 1830s, and ended in the massacre of an estimated third of the population. There is very little in English published on this period, indeed on any time pre-mid 19th century, from when rubber exports fed European industrialisation. This gap makes the Amazon an exciting place to work.

I shall use the Prize money to replace my teaching for two years. This will enable me to continue the writing, maintain my fieldwork in Brazil and visit archives in Europe. These studies will allow me to re-connect the history of the Amazon with other areas of South America and consider questions they have in common. I believe that would make a durable contribution to scholarship, and I am excited that the Philip Leverhulme Prize will permit me to pursue this goal.

Fishing on the floodplain. The flooded forest is a favourite place for fish to search for food falling from the trees.



Philip Leverhulme Prize Winners 2004

Anthropology

- Dr Catherine Alexander, Department of Anthropology, Goldsmiths College, for her work on political and economic anthropology, state institutions and cities
- Dr Mark Harris, Department of Social Anthropology, University of St Andrews, for his work on social anthropology
- Dr Marta Lahr, Department of Biological Anthropology, University of Cambridge, for her work on biological anthropology and human evolution
- Dr James Leach, King's College, University of Cambridge, for his work on social anthropology

Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences

- Dr Joanna Bullard, Department of Geography, Loughborough University, for her work on geomorphology
- Dr David Dobson, Department of Earth Sciences, University College London, for his work on experimental geophysics: high-pressure experiments
- Dr Philip Donoghue, Department of Earth Sciences, University of Bristol, for his work on palaeontology
- Dr Caroline Lear, School of Earth, Ocean and Planetary Sciences, Cardiff University, for her work on palaeoceanography
- Dr Timothy Lenton, School of Environmental Sciences, University of East Anglia, for his work on earth system science
- Dr Alastair Lewis, Department of Chemistry, University of York, for his work on analytical atmospheric chemistry

Economics

- Professor Steffen Huck, Department of Economics and ELSE, University College London, for his work on game theory and experimental economics

Mathematics and Statistics

- Dr Stephen Brooks, The Statistical Laboratory, University of Cambridge, for his work on statistics
- Dr Darren Crowdy, Department of Mathematics, Imperial College London, for his work on applied complex analysis and fluid dynamics
- Dr Matthew Keeling, Mathematics Institute, University of Warwick, for his work on mathematical biology
- Dr Jens Marklof, School of Mathematics, University of Bristol, for his work on quantum chaos
- Dr Vladimir Markovic, Mathematics Institute, University of Warwick, for his work on geometry/analysis
- Dr Richard Thomas, Department of Mathematics, Imperial College London, for his work on algebraic geometry, the geometry of Calabi-Yau manifolds and string theory

Medieval, Early Modern and Modern History

- Dr Kathryn Gleadle, Mansfield College Oxford, for her work on modern British history
- Dr Matthew Innes, School of History, Classics and Archaeology, Birkbeck College, for his work on medieval history
- Dr Stephen Lovell, Department of History, King's College London, for his work on Russian history
- Dr Rana Mitter, Institute for Chinese Studies, University of Oxford, for his work on the history and politics of modern China
- Dr Alexandra Shepard, Christ's College, University of Cambridge, for her work on the social, cultural and economic history of early modern England

For further information on this or other awards schemes that the Leverhulme Trust runs please visit our website www.leverhulme.ac.uk

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