

a vote at the HPGRG Annual General Meeting (Tuesday 6 January 1998, at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference, Kingston University).



ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY
(with The Institute of British Geographers)



**HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF GEOGRAPHY
RESEARCH GROUP**

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 1997

CONFERENCE REPORTS

New Perspectives on Alexander von Humboldt, Gottingen University, May 1997

On Thursday, 29 May 1997, the Institutes for the History of Science and Medicine in Gottingen University held a three-day symposium on 'New Perspectives on Alexander von Humboldt', under the directorship of Professor Nicolaas Rupke. Fifteen major papers were presented, together with a plenary paper by Professor Rupke, around three main headings: 'Towards a Geography of Humboldt's Fame'; 'Humboldtian Visualizations'; 'Body, Gender, and Self-Experimentation'. The first theme addressed questions bearing upon the historical geography of Humboldt's reputation, considering in the main the questions: 'Why did Humboldt become famous to the extent he did at particular periods and in particular countries, and what purposes did venerating him serve?' In the second session, contemporary engagement with the novel interest in non-verbal representation in the sciences was brought to bear in discussing Humboldt and his place in nineteenth-century scientific visualization. In the third session, papers ventured into the hitherto largely taboo domain of Humboldt's sexual proclivities additionally exploring such issues as self-experimentation and, more generally, addressing the extent to which questions of body and gender matter.

Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) has always been difficult to pin down. Various categories as explorer, mountaineer, geographer, meteorologist, geophysicist, botanist, physiologist, ethnographer, political advisor, travel writer and German patriot, he has, moreover, been differently received and debated by different national 'traditions' of scholarship. It is not easy, argued Michael Dettelbach (Smith College/MPI fur Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Berlin) readily to identify a 'Humboldtian science' (cf. the claims by Susan Faye Cannon). The point reached again and again in respect of his scientific work was Humboldt's diversity, his refusal to affirm later historiographical tendencies at classification. In contrast, a clearer picture did emerge of Humboldt's affective and private life. Lectures on Humboldt's homosexuality, self-experimentation, and obsession with form - be that in nature or in art - revealed a man as interested in exploring and describing the world of experience as he was in experiencing the world and describing it.

The Symposium was outstandingly successful in every respect: there wasn't a weak paper, the hospitality was lavish (the Symposium was generously sponsored by the Volkswagen-Stiftung), and the organisation first-rate. A small exhibition entitled 'Humboldtian Scenes and Scenery' displayed the many Humboldtian treasures from the Gottingen Library and provided a focus for social circulation outside the formal sessions.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS

Between *Politische Geographie* and *Geopolitik*: A Centenary of Ratzel's Political Geography, Trieste, Italy, 10-13 December 1997

This meeting is being organised by the Commission for the World Political Map and the History and Philosophy of Geography. Further details may be obtained either from Mark Bassin, Department of Geography, University College London, 26 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AP (M.bassin@geography.ucl.ac.uk) or from Vincent Berdoulay, SET (UMR 5603), Domaine Universitaire, 6400 Pau, France (vincent.berdoulay@univ-pau.fr).

HPGRG activities at the RGS-IBG Annual Conference, Kingston University, 5-8 January 1998

The Group is organising or co-organising two sessions at the forthcoming RGS-IBG Annual Conference. Full details of the Conference as a whole have already been circulated in the October 1997 RGS-IBG *Research Newsletter*. The Group is sole organiser of the session on **Darwinism and Geography**, and co-organiser with the Social and Cultural Geography Research Group of the session on **Exploring the Geographies of Science, Technology and Nature**.

Darwinism and Geography, Tuesday 6 January 1998 (Convenor: David Livingstone, Queen's University of Belfast)

Module 1 (9.00 - 10.30)

'Biogeography: Darwin's Science of Empire' Janet Browne (Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine)

'Tracing Wallace's Lines' James Moore (Open University)

Module 2 (11.00 - 12.30)

'"Darwinism" and landscape evolution' Rob Inkpen (University of Portsmouth)

'Disney's Darwinian landscapes: landscape preference and active evolution' Peter Vujakovic (Christ Church College, Canterbury)

'The Science of Life': evolution, humanism and planning' Pyrs Gruffudd (University of Wales, Swansea)

Exploring the Geographies of Science, Technology and Nature, Thursday 8 January 1998 (Convenors: Mike Crang, University of Durham, Judith Gerger, University of Nottingham, Simon Naylor, University of Keele)

Module 1 (9.00 - 10.30) Conceptual Explorations/ Concrete Implications I

'The place of complexity theory' Nigel Thrift (University of Bristol)

'Science, spatiality and authority' John Agar (University of Manchester)

'Modelling the world of global climate change' David Demeritt (University of British Columbia)

'Particularizing nature: from blanket farming to farming by the inch' Judith Gerber, Susanne Seymour and Charles Watkins (University of Nottingham)

Module 2 (11.00 - 12.30) Conceptual Explorations/ Concrete Implications II

'Nature as laboratory: river restoration and the scientific control of nature' Sally Eden (Middlesex University)

'Spaces, agencies and ontologies - the whereabouts of unclean cows' Steve Hinchcliffe and Simon Naylor (Keele University)

'Dysfunctional animals in functional places: scientific knowledge through the "mangle"' Chris Wilbert (Anglia Polytechnic University)

'Wild(er)nesses: reconfiguring the geographies of wildlife' Sarah Whatmore and Lorraine Thorne (University of Bristol)

History and Philosophy of Geography sessions at the Annual Conference of the Association of American Geographers, Boston USA, 24-28 March 1998

There are three sessions being organised or co-organised by the History of Geography Specialty Group at the forthcoming AAG Annual Conference in Boston. Full details of the conference programme as a whole will be available shortly: for further information, please contact the AAG, 1710 Sixteenth Street NW, Washington DC 20009-3198, USA (Fax: 202-234-2744; e.mail: gaia@aag.org). The three sessions of interest are on **The Spaces of Geographical Knowledge** (co-sponsored with the Cultural Geography Group), **History of Geography in New England** (co-sponsored by the Committee on AAG Archives and Association History), and a panel session **Neglected Voices/ Issues in the History of North American Geography**.

The Spaces of Geographical Knowledge session will be convened by Charles Withers (University of Edinburgh) and has five papers:

Richard Sorrenson (Indiana University) *'Making and unmaking coastlines in the eighteenth century: James Cook in the southern oceans'*.

Anne Godlewska (Queen's University, Ontario) *'Practical spaces of Napoleonic geographic knowledge'*

Felix Driver (Royal Holloway, London) *'Field work: toward a cultural history of science in the field'*

Joan Schwartz (National Archives of Canada) *'The Eye is a Daguerreotype: the photograph as a space of geographical knowledge'*

Charles Withers (University of Edinburgh) *'Observing Spaces: Patrick Geddes' Outlook Tower as temple of geography'*

The **History of Geography in New England** session will be convened by Paul Frederic (University of Maine at Farmington) and has four papers:

William Koelsch (Clark University) *'Between Neuchatel and Princeton: Arnold Guyot in New England, 1848-1854'*

Janice Monk (University of Arizona) *'The women were always welcome at Clark'*

Paul Frederic (University of Maine at Farmington) *'Geography at a northern outpost: the college at Farmington, Maine'*

Martin Kenzer (Florida Atlantic University) *'Honey-moon in New England: a fresh look at Carl Sauer's Year in Salem, Massachusetts'*

The discussant for this session is William Wallace (University of New Hampshire)

The panel session **Neglected Voices/Issues in the History of North America Geography** has four panellists. The session is organized by Allen Bushong (University of South Carolina). The panellists are Donald Dahlmann (U.S. Bureau of the Census), Janice Monk (University of Arizona), Neil Smith (Rutgers University), Ron Johnston (University of Bristol).

Postcolonial Geographies, a two-day HPGRG-sponsored conference, University of Southampton, 25-26 June 1998 CALL FOR PAPERS

This international and interdisciplinary conference will address the geographical importance of postcolonial critiques. The conference themes include (i) the impact of imperialism on non-Western cultures; (ii) destabilising the hegemony of imperial power and knowledge; and (iii) 'decolonizing the mind' from the ethnocentrism of dominant white, Western cultures and imperialisms. Papers should be grounded and contextualized in historically and geographically specific ways and might address: imaginative geographies of empire; geographies of decolonization; subaltern spaces; spaces of home, nation and empire; the challenges and limits of postcolonial geographies; transnational politics; and postcolonial discourses of development.

Abstracts of 300 words should be submitted by 1st March 1998 either to Dr Alison Blunt, Department of Geography, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton, SO17 1BJ (e.mail amb@soton.ac.uk), or to Dr Cheryl McEwan, School of Geography, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT (e.mail C.McEwan@bham.ac.uk). Please contact either Alison or Cheryl for further information about **Postcolonial Geographies**. The registration deadline is 30 April 1998.

European Forum on History of Science and Technology, Conference on History of Science and Technology in Education and Training, University of Strasbourg, Strasbourg, 25-26 June 1998

This conference will consider several of the main issues in the history of science and technology, including: historical studies in the history of science, technology and education; history of science and technology in the training of scientists, engineers and physicists; history of science and technology in the teaching of humanities and the social sciences; lessons from the history of science. The conference papers will be in English, French and German: simultaneous translation will be provided. For further details, please contact Professor Claude Debru, Centre Europeen d'Histoire de la Medecine, Faculte de Medecine, 4 Rue Kirschlaeger, 67085 Strasbourg Cedex France.

Darwin's Millenium Conference, University of Southampton, 3-5 July 1998

This multi-disciplinary, international conference will address topics such as social determinism, natural and unnatural selection, ethnographies, origins, visual representation, matter and consciousness, literature and science, reproductive technologies, ecologies, voyages, natural orders, empiricism and the problem of method, animal estates, and human behaviour. For further information, please contact Dr. Lucy Hartley or Professor Cora Kaplan at the Department of English, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton, SO17 1BF.

ECLIPSE 99: Navigational stimulus to the history of science, University of Plymouth, 9-12 August 1999

This conference, which coincides with the next total eclipse of the Sun to be visible from England, will explore the impact of navigation on the history of science. Offers of papers to and further information from P A H Seymour, Institute of Marine Studies, University of Plymouth, Drake Circus, Plymouth, Devon PL4 8AA.

International Geographical Union Commission on the History and Philosophy of Geography, Meeting on 'The Movement of Ideas in the History of Geographic Thought'

The Commission is hoping to draw attention to the importance of understanding geography's participation in, and contribution to, the main philosophical and intellectual currents that have characterised international exchanges. Three sub-themes will serve to structure the meeting: (1) the contribution of geographical ideas to the streams of the world's intellectual currents; (2) the question of the transfer of ideas from one country to another (their reception and their transmission) and their re-use in the country of origin; (3) the contribution of travel to development of geographical ideas: the relationship of the journey to the production of geographical and scientific knowledge (excluding the traditional perspective of the history of discovery and exploration).

For further information, contact either Mark Bassin, Department of Geography, University College London, 26 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AP (e.mail m.bassin@geography.ucl.ac.uk) or Vincent Berdoulay, SET (UMR 5603), Domaine

SOME AUSTRALIAN NOTES by Patrick Armstrong, Department of Geography, University of Western Australia

As I have done on previous occasions, I give here some brief notes on a selection of publications that may be of interest to members of the RGS-IBG History and Philosophy of Geography Research Group that have been published recently in, on, or from Australia.

The traditional study of the history of exploration and discovery of their land has long been one of the interests of Australian geographers. Distinctive in their approach to this established field have been the publications of Glen McLaren over the last few years. His thesis is that the exploration and discovery of the Australian continent was intimately connected to the development of bushcraft in Australia. Glen McLaren's special interest has been the enigmatic figure of Ludwig Leichhardt (1813-1848) who he regards as 'standing at the centre of the nineteenth century exploration of Australia'. In *Beyond Leichhardt: Bushcraft and the Exploration of Australia* (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1996), Leichhardt is seen as something of a transitional figure. Before him 'soldiers, convicts and government officials stumbled warily through country they called deserts ... Beyond Leichhardt, the real deserts were conquered by expert bushmen, steeped in the lessons of a century of exploration'. In this and his other publications, McLaren shows how close was the connection between masters such as the price of horses, the development of equipment used with horses, and methods of food preservation on the one hand and the progress of exploration on the other. McLaren co-operated with his PhD supervisor, William Cooper, in a paper entitled 'The changing dietary habits of nineteenth-century Australian explorers' (*Australian Geographer*, 1997, 28 (1), 97-105), and summarised his work on Leichhardt in an essay in volume 17 of *Geographers' Biobibliographic Studies* (Mansell, 1997). Glen McLaren writes well, and with authority: he is a former shearer and horse-breaker with a wide knowledge of bush life and of outback Australia.

Moving towards the other end of some hypothetical scale is Jane Jacobs' *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (Routledge, 1997). One reviewer (David Myers in the *Australian*) described this as 'a significant expression of the post-structuralist practice of geography'. Jane Jacobs maintains that geography and mapping were complicit in the imperial enterprise in the way that the southern hemisphere was interpreted and named in terms of the colonising power's culture. She also writes: 'My concern is with the way in which the cultural politics of place and identity in contemporary First World cities is enmeshed in the legacies of imperial ideologies and practices'. She illustrates her themes with examples from Perth, Brisbane and London. She is critical of the way in which Australian city councils incorporate - or fail to incorporate - Aboriginal values in planning. This work is of particular interest in the context of the contemporary Aboriginal land rights movement and the 'Reconciliation' debate in Australia.

Griffith Taylor (1880-1963), the founder of academic geography in Australia continues to exercise fascination. Joe Powell has written about Griff many times before, and continues the discussion with 'The pulse of citizenship: reflections on Griffith Taylor and "nation planning"' (*Australian Geographer*, 1997, 28 (1), 39-52). In the same issue also appears John Pickard's 'Griffith Taylor's Palimpsest Theory of

the dry valleys of Victoria Land, Antarctica' (pp.53-67). Those interested in Griffith Taylor's contribution should also note the booklet by S. J. Gale, published by the Department of Geography at the University of Sydney in 1996: *75 Years: the Anniversary of University Geography in Australia*. This publication (illustrated by some rare old photographs) describes the history of the department, which was founded by Taylor, as well as its present activities. A short note 'from the editors' of *Australian Geographical Studies* (1996, 34 (2), 281-282) also commemorated this anniversary, acknowledging Griffith Taylor's special importance. George Dury (1916-1996) was the next-but-one head of the Sydney department, and had a significant influence upon it. He died in England in October 1996, and a brief but perceptive obituary of him appears in *Australian Geographical Studies* (1997, 35 (1), 102-104), written by Trevor Langford-Smith, himself the sixth holder of the Sydney position.

The matter of migration is (understandably) another preoccupation of Australian geographers and historians. Two such studies are Michael Rose's *Australia, Britain and Migration, 1915-1940: a study of desperate hopes* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) and *Oceans of Consolation: personal accounts of Irish migration to Australia* (Melbourne University Press, 1995). Joe Powell, in a review article entitled 'Migration revisited: recent historical accounts' in *Australian Geographical Studies* 1996, 34 (2), 267-270, not only compares these two works, but mentions a number of other comparable studies, and has some of his own comments on approaches to the study of migration, and the use of archival sources in its documentation. He admires the detailed, intimate approach to the study of 'a profoundly human experience'. Of the study of emigrants' letters, Powell writes: 'These little compositions which delivered so much solace truly go to the heart of a theme which should never be drained of its emotional charge'.

Patrick Armstrong

MEMORIAL PLAQUE TO JAMES HUTTON

A memorial plaque to James Hutton (1726-1797), for some the 'founder' of 'modern' geology, was unveiled on Wednesday 6th August at the site of his house in garden in Viewcraig Gardens, off Holyrood Road in Edinburgh during the International Bicentennial Meeting organised by the Royal Society of Edinburgh and held in Edinburgh, 5-9 August 1997. About 200 people, including scientists from around the world and dignitaries from the City and the University of Edinburgh, attended the unveiling ceremony of the memorial mounted on a single boulder, surrounded by smaller granite stones, symbolic of Hutton's pioneering work on granite and igneous intrusives, and conglomerate pebbles carried from the Central Highlands of Scotland to the shores of the Moray Firth. The memorial is, thus, to be read as a symbol of the Huttonian Theory of the Earth.

HPGRG COMMITTEE MATTERS

Several vacancies will arise on the HPGRG Committee as from January 1998. The position of Chair will become vacant, as will the position of Newsletter Editor. Dr Elspeth Graham's position as a committee member will also become vacant. Nominations for these positions (in writing with a proposer and seconder) should reach Dr Blunt, HPGRG Secretary, by 1 January 1998 to allow debate and, if needed,